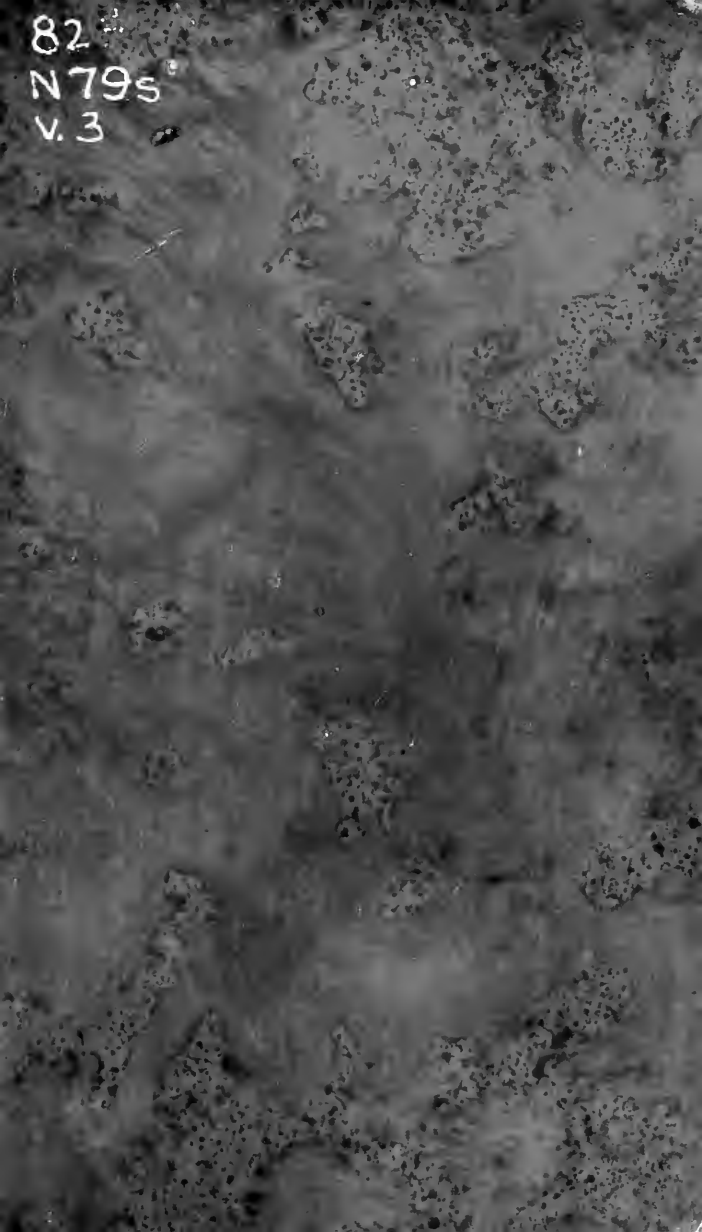
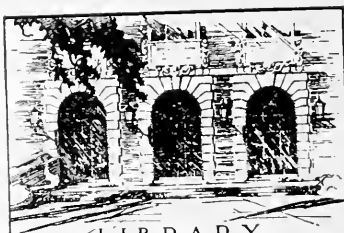


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THE
STRANGERS.



THE

STRANGERS;

After Some Strife
A NOVEL.

By Mrs. Norris

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY MRS. NORRIS,

AUTHOR OF SECOND LOVE, &c.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

Printed by W. Glendinning, 25, Hatton Garden;

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THE
STRANGERS.



CHAP. I

AN EMBARRASSMENT.



THE contentment which Colonel Belnard now experienced gradually enabled his mind to return to that activity which had once so pre-eminently distinguished him, and the feelings of affection and friendship returned in their full force. To Waltheim's intentions of benefit he deemed himself as deeply indebted as if they had indeed taken effect; but hitherto he had not been able to support the idea

of a conversation on the subject, which he of course expected must follow their meeting; and to the earnest solicitudes of his family his heart had as yet refused the return which nature and gratitude demanded.


But now to see Waltheim was become his wish, and to comply with the entreaties of his family to return to the bosom of it, his determination. The legacies left by the late Doctor to his sister and niece were already paid into the hands of Waltheim's agent, but the gift of Olivia he resolved himself to announce, and the day after his visit to the metropolis, he wrote to his friend, through the medium of the agent, requesting an interview at whatever time and place might suit his convenience. He also by the same post apprized his father, that he intended to

defer his visit to Belvale no longer than was necessary to accomplish the last circumstance that remained unfinished of his late parental preceptor.

But the delay of this was infinitely greater than he expected, though perhaps not more than he might have deemed probable. Though the agent affirmed that he had punctually forwarded the letter to Bath, where Mr. Waltheim was settled for the winter, neither Waltheim or answer arrived; and Belnard recollecting how uncertain might be the term of protraction, thought he might without any great breach of politeness, return to Estlake Lodge, where, as it was now become his own, he had some arrangements to make preparatory to the absence he meditated.

He therefore called on the agent to apprize him of this intention, and request any letter might be forwarded to him to Windsor; but this precaution proved unnecessary: he was informed that Mr. Waltheim had arrived in town two days before, and was as yet prevented calling on Colonel Belnard, but would certainly do so the first moment he could possibly get to himself.

Colonel Belnard, in consequence, waited at home the remainder of this day, and the entire of the next; but the expected visiter did not appear, and as the agent had only accidentally met him in the street, his address was not known. Their suspense became at length extremely vexatious, but that night, long



after Belnard had given him up, he was announced.

The meeting was on both sides affecting. Belnard would have expressed his feelings, but something choaked his utterance; Walthelm however soon recovered his volubility, and among other things declared, that nothing could have made him happy but the very step he had taken. Sophia's passionate attachment, far exceeded any he would have expected or hoped from Olivia, and if he committed any accidental carelessness of conduct, Sophy either did not, or would not see it.

“It must be a horrid sensation,” added Walthelm, “for a man to feel afraid of his wife.”

In the subsequent conversation, however, Belnard perceived that Mrs. Crank and Sophia, equally held him in subjection, and when they most exercised their authority, he deemed them most actuated by affection. He boasted that they could not bear him out of their sight, and it appeared, that in the consciousness of inferiority to the object from whom she had attracted him, Sophia feared the decrease or privation of those affections, which pride whispered were necessary to vanity. It also appeared, that they had taken considerable pains to depreciate the perfections of Olivia, and Waltheim confessed that he believed she was very peculiar in her ideas.

In this last opinion Belnard entirely coincided; she was so very peculiar that

he had never seen any woman to whom she ought to be compared, and as a strong proof of this fact, he related the disposition she had made in favour of Sophia.

Waltheim was astonished ! he thought it noble ! kind ! generous ! he expressed himself delighted in the power of convincing Mrs. Crank that Olivia was not mercenary ; and her particular mention of Sophia, added to the obligation and delicacy of the act.

Fortunately, in this conversation of two hours, he never thought of enquiring for the situation, health, or residence of Olivia, or did he speak of her marriage with Belnard, except as an event which he expected must of course speedily take place. At length he recollected that it

was time to be gone, as he had only slipped away from Drury Lane Theatre, between the play and entertainment, and the ladies would begin to wonder what was become of him.

“Both play and entertainment are over, I fancy, by this time,” said the Colonel, “it is near one o’clock.” Waltheim started in great affright, and was hurrying away, but his friend detained him to enquire where he lived, and at his solicitations, promised to defer returning to Estlake Lodge, that he might dine with him and the ladies the next day.

The next day however, when he was prepared to fulfil his engagement, he received a note from Waltheim, expressing

the greatest concern for not being able to see him, as he expected; but Mrs. Crank was so enraged at the gift of Olivia, which she insisted was a concerted plan to make little of Sophia, that until the storm was blown over, he recommended Belnard not to appear in her sight. Sophy too, he said, though very much delighted on first hearing it, was now quite unhappy at her mother's suggestions, but as he knew their feelings were excited by apprehensions that his heart might return to its first partiality, he could not but consider himself obliged in the cause, however mortifying might be the effect.

To confute Mrs. Crank's suspicions, Belnard did not for one moment suppose necessary, and whatever respect her affinity to his late friend and her connec-

tion with Waltheim, might entitle her to, he felt for herself a contempt too great to permit concern for any imaginations she might indulge; and finding himself now at liberty, he eagerly made use of it by returning to the peaceful retreat of his dwelling at the Lodge.

Here he soon immersed in employment, which yielded to him sensations of pleasure that no other gratification could bestow; but he was at times wholly overcome by apprehensions of disappointment, which daily became stronger and more frequent. In the possession of Olivia's picture he gave his heart up to hopes, which reason, as she gradually returned to her empire, pointed out to him were founded in no probable circumstance; and though he still pursued his projected

alterations in the house and adjacent pleasure-ground, he frequently sunk to despondence in the reflection, that the object for whom he was thus engaged, was now separated from his knowledge, and perhaps for ever.

At length, however, he was urged by combining motives to absent himself from a spot which newly became more endeared to him; but the entreaties of his family could no longer be denied, and to a pressing letter from his father, he returned an answer, which fixed the day for his going to Belvale at the distance of a week. In this interval, he gave the several directions necessary to complete the work he had begun, and established old Maddox as

master and superintendant during his absence.

But this visit so long intended, and so anxiously looked forward to, was yet destined to be protracted. The evening before his intended departure, Maddox entered the study with looks of consternation to inform him, that Jemmy the gate-keeper from Arnault Hill, had a message for him. The idea of Olivia ever present to his imagination, suggested the thought that the message related to her, and he instantly went to receive it.

Jemmy was pale, and looked as if struck with horror.—“O, Sir,” he exclaimed,—“my master—”

“Your master ?—but what of him, Jemmy ?”

“ He’s as low as the poorest of us now, Sir, and I can’t for the life of me help being sorry for him. He was brought home a quarter of an hour ago—dying.”

This, indeed, was intelligence too shocking to commiserate. The Colonel could not speak even to enquire; but Jemmy added, that surgeon Medforth was with his master when he was brought home, and sent him to request Colonel Belnard would come directly.

This was not the moment to hesitate, and Belnard in a few minutes reached Arnault Hill.

Here was truly a scene of confusion. Mr. Arnault had just expired, and his daughter’s wailings announced the dis-

mal intelligence. Surgeon Medforth forcibly carried her from the dreadful scene to her chamber, where she now was in strong hystericks, and laughed or cried with frightful vehemence. Soothings considerably aggravated her grief; she demanded to be restored to the lifeless form of her departed father, and accused the surgeon of cruelty in-tearing her from her adored parent!—her only relative!—she could not survive the loss:—one grave should contain the cold corse of both.

He heard her for some time with patience, in the hope that nature exhausted, would weaken the force of her exclamations; but perceiving that as the first shock wore off, her lamentations became more energetic, he very sharply reprimanded her.

manded her, and asserted that he had never seen true sorrow so noisy and turbulent. The harshness of this remark deeply wounded her ; her tears encreased, but she became more quiet, and he was at length enabled to leave her to the care of the maid who had informed him of Colonel Belnard's arrival.

A full relation of the truly mournful circumstance now took place; and surgeon Medforth informed the Colonel that the unhappy man owed his death to his reigning foible, pride. It had always been his particular orders that the horse he kept for his own riding, should never be mounted by any person about his stables, but *led* to water or to exercise ; one of the stable helpers, however, had the week before presumed to disobey this

injunction, and his master happening to see him, immediately sent for and discharged him on the spot. The fellow was extremely insolent, and provoked Mr. Arnault to an unusual display of dignity, particularly galling to the native sense of equality which every man feels towards his fellow-creature. The affair was however dropped, and seemed to be forgotten ; but the man on going away swore he would prove that idleness and good feeding, were as bad for the horse as for the master.

“ The event has in fact verified this assertion ;” continued surgeon Medforth. “ I met Mr. Arnault to day when he went out on his usual ride, and fortunately turned back to ask him some questions, about which we were engaged in

conversation, when suddenly a gun was fired from the hedge, in the very moment we were passing by. Both cattle started, but Mr. Arnault's plunged violently, and threw him from the saddle, though not from the stirrup; his boot caught in it, and (shocking to think) he was dragged the distance of at least a hundred yards.—Passengers in the road by that time stopped the animal, and released the rider, who was apparently lifeless; we got him into a cottage, and I at length succeeded in bringing him to animation, and finally to his senses. I then understood from him that he earnestly wished to be carried home, and as he persisted I was obliged to comply. He lived to see his daughter, and charged both her and me with his forgiveness for you, of all injuries either intended, or accidental.”

“ Wretched man;” cried Belnard; “ I never offered him either. He was ever his own enemy.”——

“ Yes,” rejoined the surgeon; “ and the deplorable consequence must now more than ever be visible. His own pride kept all who might be friends at a distance, and his daughter’s prevented her seeking to reconcile them; she has no relations, and in the midst of a social neighbourhood is quite alone.”

Belnard truly and deeply pitied her situation; her follies, particularly that relating to him, he ever believed originated with her father, and in the manner of life and thinking in which she had been brought up; but it was not grief, it was horror that prevented him

till now recollecting, that his presence at this time, however flattering might be the attention, was certainly a confirmation to the world of Mr. Arnault's surmises ; and he thought surgeon Medforth ought to send for some other person, if he either wished or believed the measure necessary. He accordingly stated how unpleasant might be the result of his now intruding, and how impossible that he could in any arrangement interfere ; but what was his astonishment at learning that Mr. Arnault had made a will at the time Doctor Estlake annexed the codicil to his ; and had left him joint executor with Miss Arnault, though she was sole heiress and sole legatee ; and being of age, could have been authorized to the performance of the trust, without any coadjutor.

The vexation of this circumstance was infinite. Belnard found himself extremely awkward and unpleasant, in the inference implied by the will, and that which she had reason to fear Miss Arnault would continue to deduce if he yielded to her even those attentions which occasional conferences on the subject of her father's affairs might demand. To accept the charge was against his judgement and his inclination, but to decline it in the present melancholy crisis was unfeeling and unmanly; and he finally resolved to undertake the duty, provided surgeon Medforth prevailed on Miss Arnault to leave the house.

“ I dare not make the proposal,” answered Medforth, “till this first hurricane is blown over. She will call me barba-

rian for wishing her even to live ; but I will make my wife come and take her to my house, if I can by any argument of any kind induce her to listen to reason. Against this delay there was no appeal ; but so firm was Belnard against leaving room for mistake, that he would not be detained at Arnault Hill while its new possessor remained in it ; and surgeon Medforth agreeing that it must be the most effectual means to send her from it, let him depart with a promise of returning in the evening.

Finding now, that the period of his visit to Belvale was more indefinite than ever, he wrote on his return to the Lodge informing his father of what had happened as an excuse for his continued absence. He knew that the name and

character of Miss Arnault had been the frequent subject of conversation with his family, but her foibles they had never heard of: Waltheim had often loudly trumpeted her praises in terms which though they supposed exaggerated, they were yet assured by Belnard were justified in truth; and he himself experienced sentiments of friendship on her own account, and of gratitude for her conduct to Olivia, that imposed on him the obligation of glossing over the regret he felt in being thus enlisted in her service. His delicacy therefore forbad all complaints, but he spoke in strong terms of his embarrassment in an incident so extraordinary; and his fears that his new duties would detain him till Miss Arnault could either return and establish herself in her own household, or until he

could find some proper residence for her in the family of some other person. He concluded by saying that his esteem for her and anxiety for her welfare rendered this task doubly oppressive, and that no occurrence of his life had ever given him a similar degree of uneasiness and vexation.

In the evening according to promise he returned to Arnault Hill, and as he expected found that surgeon Medforth had succeeded in prevailing on Miss Arnault to go to his house, though she had positively refused until he informed her of Colonel Belnard's determination. To that she immediately replied that she was very grateful to his delicacy, and that only her grief frenzied her senses, she must have thought of this propriety herself.

The Colonel and surgeon Medforth now proceeded to the library, and in presence of the servants opened the scrutoire, where they found the will, which they were obliged to open for the purpose of taking instructions respecting the funeral. This point indeed was treated with great minuteness of attention, and full directions that it should be handsome. The entire of his property after the payment of his debts remained to his daughter, but except her's and the executor there was not a single name mentioned ; and the servants who from the will of Doctor Estlake had been taught to suppose themselves expectants of bounty, though none of them had served any length of time, now fancied themselves as much aggrieved by the neglect of the testator, as if they had sacrificed the service of their lives to his comfort and convenience.

With such subjects it was very difficult to treat; or induce them by either harsh or lenient commands to forward the necessary arrangements. The strictness of their regularity had been principally in show; that which came not under the master's eye was disorder and quarrel.—If the apparent occurrences of the day were to the appointed moment, and those orders obeyed which were to be scanned by the eye of authority, the servants deemed themselves emancipated from the rest: Mr. Arnault was never attended by affection and duty; imperiousness and compulsion enforced his commands, and he was served accordingly.

At length after a week passed in the most painful ceremonials of mournful

paraphernalia, the remains of Mr. Arnault were consigned to the tomb of his ancestors, and his daughter became the only living monument of his pride and pedantry. Wedded to the belief that she should think for herself she cautiously avoided suffering others to think for her, and the interest which her many amiable qualities impressed, were blunted by a foible which wounded the self-love of those who were otherwise willing to exert themselves in contributing to her comfort or benefit. In the possession of every blessing her situation admitted of, the present moment was ever clouded by dark expectations for the future; and though perfectly aware that she was one of the best girls in the world, Mrs. Medforth became weary, the surgeon lost all patience, and the whole house was rendered uneasy.

CHAP. II.

AN ECLAIRCISSEMENT.



FORTUNATELY for Colonel Bernard the affairs of the late Mr. Arnault were kept in a state of regularity that did honor to the precision and learning of that gentleman. Nothing was left undone that could be done, and every incident however trifling was marked with a degree of exactitude that few bestow on circumstances of importance. Miss Arnault soon found herself in possession of a competent fortune free from all care and encumbrance, and the only

thing that remained to employ her thoughts was where and how she should fix her residence: hitherto she had not visited her house since the mournful scene, and Belnard now urged to her the heavy losses she must sustain by this neglect. This was a hint too plain to be misinterpreted, but however she might have despised a mercenary motive, she saw the reason and propriety of the advice, and pursued it: again she entered her father's house; shut her eyes as if to blind memory when she visited each room, and finally went through the business with good sense and dispatch.

Belnard now believed he was entirely free from all restraint; but alas! he deceived himself. His family deducing from the various occurrences the real

intensions and wishes of the late Mr. Arnault, and recollecting the friendly regard with which his daughter was ever mentioned by Belnard, deemed themselves called upon to contribute as much as in them lay to the conclusion of that uneasiness which they had long suspected existed, and of which they believed they had now found the source. Constance in a very pressing letter to Miss Arnault preferred her father and mother's request, that she might immediately visit Belvale; and Mr. Belnard by the same post informed his son of this step in his favour.

The disappointment and real distress occasioned to Belnard by this letter was excessive; he long considered how he should avert the blow, but a note from

Miss Arnault decided all his waverings ! it informed him of the letter she had received, and signified her assent in a manner that sufficiently impressed her opinion of the compliment she had yielded in accepting the invitation.

No subterfuge now remained to him, and however repugnant to his feelings were the contemplations of the journey, he was compelled to undertake it, with the companion thus chosen for him ; and the choice of the day being left to him he fixed it as early as their mutual convenience might warrant.

At length it was commenced. He called on her at the appointed hour in a hired chaise, and attended by a footman of her's, and his groom, they set out for

Belvale. Though little prepared to find pleasure in her society his chagrin insensibly wore off;—her conversation was animated and agreeable; a sense of propriety, well grounded integrity, much delicacy and affectionate warmth, alternately presented themselves to his view; and though the singular turn of her expressions, the fervency of her attitudes sometimes amounting to distortion, the forcible tone of voice and the decision of opinion which he had ever condemned were yet most terribly visible, he could not deny to her understanding and principles the tribute of approbation. On a former intimacy indeed he had discovered many of these good qualities, but she then had opportunities of playing off only the graces; he now recollected her late kind attentions to her who was ever

present to his memory, and permitted to his mind the fullest conviction that she was capable not only of thinking but of acting the virtues.

But that he had so much leaned to mercy's side in speaking of her to his family, proved in a degree unfortunate; they received her with the affection due to a person whom they supposed to be the elected wife of a beloved son and brother, but a few hours dissipated these delightful prospects. Her anxiety to appear refined and elegant destroyed the language and features of nature, and left her the object of ridicule and disappointment.

Mrs. Belnard was a pupil of the old school, but the prejudices attributed to it

had in her been corrected by a very enlarged education. The inroads made on morality by the allurements of vanity, she lamented as a national evil, but averse to extremes she never opposed the moderate adoption of general fashions. Constance dressed well; her robes were as well made, and her hair as well decorated, as her new companion could boast of; but the latter, eager to show the proportion of a really fine figure and the imagined brilliancy of a dark eye, exposed the one by the most studied closeness of dress, and concealed the other by a circlet of hair through which she peeped with the most charming animation.

The father and mother of Belnard contemplated her with much anxiety, and much surprize; but years had cooled

the energy of their decisions, and they endeavoured to keep judgement suspended. Constance by nature and habit rapidly deduced her conclusions. She also, attentively considered her new guest, and drawing her brother to the window, softly asked if the affair was settled?"

"What affair?" he demanded.

"Have you determined to marry Miss Arnault?"

"She probably would not accept me, Constance."

"Does it rest only on that?" she again asked.

“No;” he seriously replied. “I do not intend myself the honor of a trial.”

“So then,” cried Constance; “I may begin to like her directly.”

“What are you chattering about with Charles?” demanded her father.

“A cure for the heart ach, Sir,” she replied, resuming her chair; “and I have already got one.”

The subject was dropped, but Constance soon became very intimate with Miss Arnault, and before the day was over declared herself quite delighted with her new friend.

But grateful to the heart of Belnard

as was the returned voice of affection, it yet wanted power to shield him from memory. The image of Olivia ever present to his eye and his imagination, deprived his mind of strength to resist the influence of a passion which reason predicted must probably be unsuccessful. Arguments against its indulgence plunged him into melancholy, and though fate had apparently signed his destiny; hope still struggled against the decree.

Yet conscious of a weakness which in another he would have condemned, and earnest to conceal it, he exerted his spirits to elude suspicion. He talked of every thing, and called up every talent to entertain; but it was soon discovered that he failed of being himself entertained, and apprehensions once excited are ever on

the watch for confirmation. His frequent seclusions, his long rides, his solitary walks, and care-worn features, evinced some concealed uneasiness, and wishes to relieve it animated enquiries into the cause.

To call him to task,—however,—to ask him to avow that which he would preserve from their knowledge, appeared an act of compulsion, inconsistent with the conduct ever adhered to by Mr. and Mrs. Belnard towards a son whom they also esteemed as a friend: they hoped by silence and attention to win his confidence, and a few days convinced him that he was the object of their concern. The tenderness of their voice, the kindness of their manner, and their anxiety to promote his pleasure, increased the op-

pression of his heart, and rendered him unable to enjoy that society which hitherto had possessed such charms: to elude their observation was now impossible, and to escape it his only remedy.

But to leave them a prey to their fears, without yielding them the gratification of sharing his confidence, he deemed a breach of gratitude which he determined to avoid: a few words to his sister, would spare him a conversation with his father; yet to confess even to her, that he indulged an attachment without a probability of success, and in defiance of absolute rejection, stung him to the soul. He felt his error and delayed to acknowledge it.

Constance, however, could ill brook

a silence so painful to her heart and her curiosity ; though forbidden to question him, she soon became too impatient for submissive obedience, and after much more reflection than she usually devoted to any one study, she resolved on collecting from the conversation of Miss Arnault something that might lead to the intelligence she required.

Mr. and Mrs. Belnard were accustomed every day to take an airing of two hours : this interval the new friends always passed by themselves, as Belnard seldom remained at home in the mornings. He had this day gone out on pretence of hunting ; but Constance remarked that he went unattended, and hesitated not to believe that he merely rambled from home to indulge his contemplations.

“What a strange creature is that brother of mine become!” said she. “I cannot imagine what has occasioned the alteration.”

“Think you him changed?” asked Miss Arnault.

“I know he is; I’m terribly afraid there are symptoms of love in his disorder.”

“What symptoms have excited your alarms?” demanded Miss Arnault, stooping over her work.

Constance observed her attentively, and pursued the subject with new vigour.

“A great many indeed, that give me serious uneasiness.”

“ But why be uneasy, if it were the case ? ”

“ Because *his* uneasiness can only proceed from hopelessness.”

“ Poor young man ! ” cried Miss Arnault.

“ He is indeed to be pitied if as I suspect, the object is either unattainable, or a very great fool.”

“ Heavens ! ” cried Miss Arnault, “ why must she be either ? ”

“ The plainest reasons in the world. If she is married you know he cannot get her.”

“Married?” what a horrid idea!”

“But it is the fashion,” returned Constance, with affected carelessness, “and Charles is a man of taste you know.”

“I have heard as much,” said Miss Arnault, smiling.

“In that case, he may sigh to the winds, and add his tears to the stream”—

“Poor fellow!” sighed Miss Arnault.

“And if in the other case, some modern Puck has squeezed juice into his eyes and made him squint at an idiot.”——

“Why that alternative?”

“Because none but an idiot would refuse him.”

“That assertion amounts not to an axiom,” said Miss Arnault, much offended.

“I think it does. Where is the woman of sense that would not jump at the offer.”

“Jump?—what a gross expression!—but you are jesting?”

“Upon my honor, I think as I speak. We jump at baubles less amusing than a husband; and for such an husband!”—

What a singular manner have you of expressing yourself!” cried Miss Arnault.

“Do you think so?” returned Constance,
 “but I speak what comes uppermost.
 Poor Charles!—if he is in love—if his
 heart is devoted to a woman of sense who
 is free, he will love her for ever.”

“Is he then so constant?”

“As a turtle dove. Every time you
 see him don’t you think he is preparing to
 swell his throat with a coo—re—coo?”

Again Miss Arnault looked up—but
 Constance appeared quite melancholy,
 and sighed from the bottom of her heart.

“At all hazards,” she resumed, “I
 will speak to him.”

“What!——would you hurry him?”

“I cannot help it; I am so much hurried myself by my curiosity and impatience there is no remedy but an open declaration,”

“Declaration?—merciful heaven!—what strange ideas have you—hurry him to a declaration?”

“Yes—for then we shall have the wedding.”

“Easily surmised!” cried Miss Arnault indignantly; “a woman of delicacy however is not so easily obtained.”

“Why, now, tell me, would you for one refuse him?”

“Assuredly,” she returned much of-

fended, "if he observed not the respect due to my character and rank."

"That could easily be ascertained. The first he already knows, the last he could learn at the herald's office."

"I fancy he need not enquire there."

"Nay," returned Constance. "I was only stating a case, for to tell you the truth I half suspected you knew the lady he sighs for; but if you do, I see you will not confess it."

"Certainly not!" she replied colouring deeply.

"It is a little provoking," pursued Constance, "that he should make you

his confidant, and leave me out of the privy council."

"You are unjust to him and to me," cried Miss Arnault. "He never presumed to offer me his confidence."

"Presumed?—favoured you mean?"—

"I do not mean—I should think at this time his confidence an insult."

"Well, well," Constance rejoined, "we need not quarrel now about it——here he comes himself, and I can apply to the fountain head."

"For heaven's sake!" cried Miss Arnault, entreatingly.

“Yes, and for my own sake.—But pray don’t go.”

Belnard entered—he took up a work basket that lay on a chair between the two ladies and sat in its place.

“Now,” said Constance, “you are admirably placed for a catechism. Miss Arnault puts a question to that ear, while I entertain this.”

Miss Arnault now really believed she was about to commit some serious indiscretion, and made an excuse to leave the room.

“And what question will you put to me?” said Belnard, resolving to avail himself of this introduction.

“ A great many, brother, if I don't talk too much.”

“ When you do, I will stop you.”

“ Fairly promised !—in the first place, tell me is not to-day very warm ?”

“ Quite the contrary ;”——“ but,” cried he, “ to what purpose that question ?”

“ As an epilogue to some others. You went to ride and your hair is not blown by the wind, or your cheeks flushed by exercise.”

“ That is because I rode slowly.”

“And why so pray?—question the second.”

“My mind was otherwise engaged.”

“I guessed as much,” said Constance, looking significantly, “and I was wiser again than that. I guessed what you were thinking of.”

“Did you indeed:—and did you guess of who?”

“Perhaps even that.”

“Tell me,” said he, “who you suspect was, or is the subject of my contemplations?”

“You once denied to me that Miss Arnault was.”

“And do you wish me still to deny it?”——

“Dear Charles! whoever you marry, must be sure of my affections.”

“Dear Constance,” he returned, his eyes filled with emotion, “I wish I could put your affections to the proof.”

“Miss Arnault is then the person?”

“She is not.”

“Well I may now say I am glad. If you had fixed your choice on her, I should have been able to forget her foibles in her perfections; but I am persuaded there are others would make you happier.”

“One other there is.”

“Ah, brother! now you come to the point.”

“I fear you will think not. I am not going to tell you who she is.”

“May I ask why?”

“I will tell you why. My situation with respect to her, is so delicate that even to my sister I cannot permit myself to mention her name.”

“Of course I submit; but may I ask a question more?”

“Proceed.”

“What was the reason that Doctor Estlake made such an odd alteration in his will?” “Dear brother!” she added, throwing her arms round his neck; “how I shall adore this sister.”

Bernard was much affected: A crowd of ideas rushed on his mind, and disengaging himself, he walked to the window to recover.

“And now,” said he, resuming his place; “what other question will you ask?”

“None.—I fear I have gone too far; but you may rest satisfied in my silence.”

“Then, since you are so discreet, and

have guessed so much, I will satisfy you more fully." He drew the little medalion from its concealment, and held it to the view of Constance.

She gazed at it with much attention. "I think," said she, "I shall know her when we meet."

"Ah, Constance!—if that may be—The probability is you never will see her."

"How!—I heard indeed that she had left Windsor, but do you not know to where she is fled?"

"No——would that I did!"

"You would follow her?"

“ I think I would, even in the certainty of being rejected.”

“ Good God! that sounds very romantic.”

“ Perhaps it is so. If you ever feel as I have felt, Constance!—but that is impossible.”

“ Yet my heart is not cold. I almost think I love her idea since she is dear to you.”

“ Dear !” he repeated in agitation—
“ yes !—she has cost me my peace of mind, I fear for ever.”

“ Ah ! Arthur, that is practising against your own preaching. Have you not told

me that persons can reason their passions into subjection?"

"I have so, and it was that very practice in another, that led me to the fault I now commit; but we will talk no more of it—only this much—when I am gone, you may tell my father and mother what I have told you."

"Gone!—Why I hope you do not mean to turn Werter on our hands, and die for a Charlotte?"

"Charlotte was married—I am not so unprincipled as to yield to a passion of that nature."

"Yet it was pure."

“ I much doubt that my dear Constance : though the character of Charlotte is represented in glowing colours, her conduct was not prudent.”

“ And what was his character ?”

“ That of a headstrong fool ; resolved to die because he was disappointed.”

“ Come now, Charles !” cried Constance ; “ confess that Socrates himself might have taken a lesson from me ? I have made you acknowledge yourself exactly that you have described poor Mr. Werter.”

Belnard coloured ; pleaded guilty to the charge and promised to profit by so good a hint.

“ I find,” said he, “ that idleness really is the parent of evil. My mind in this place is destitute of employment; I cannot fix my attention to reading:—I must leave it. Only on my mother’s account I would join my regiment abroad.”

“ It would certainly kill her.”

“ Therefore I will not think of it: but I must leave Belvale. The world has given me to Miss Arnault for a husband, and on her account it is necessary to prevent the circulation of such false prophecies.”

“ Well,” cried Constance; “ I certainly applaud that motive, my mother herself is uneasy——”

“ This step will at once dissolve all difficulties,” said Belnard ; “ and I will fix an early day to execute it. You may then tell my mother all I have said.”

Constance had in many instances perceived that Miss Arnault believed herself beloved by the man so evidently selected by her father for a husband. She had, as surgeon Medforth once observed, a happy knack of turning every circumstance to her own ideas:—if Belnard was absent she admired his delicacy,—if present she was pleased with his attentions; and the interest he took in the arrangement of her affairs, was proof positive that he considered them as belonging in a degree to himself.

But volatile as was the sister of Bel-

hard, she yet possessed sentiments of the strictest propriety ;—her manner, though lively, was entirely free from that levity which permits a disadvantageous opinion of the principles of a female ; and while she gave utterance to every sally of imagination, the native purity of her heart repelled every advance of a too familiar freedom. She might be called whimsical, but she was not capricious : and while she discriminated with judgement, sometimes with severity, her affections were steady and fervent. A figure a little below the middle size but remarkably light and graceful, and a face animated by good sense and a happy temper rendered her an object pleasing to the sight, as she was a companion for the best formed mind : in her most cheerful hours her mirth was never over-

coming, and when situations called for the serious or the grave, Constance, Bernard, never outstepped the limits proscribed, though the playfulness of her disposition frequently gave a sportive turn to the wisest of her sentiments, that diffused a charm inexpressible through every action and every speech.

Of Miss Arnault, she judged with something like severity, but not with prejudice. Had she been first ascertained that she was her brother's choice, the disappointment had been great indeed; but fearless of this alliance she suffered herself to see the good that predominated over the weak, and felt a degree of regard for her as a friend, the greater because she apprehended nothing from her as a sister. With such senti-

ments towards her she therefore experienced real regret at the mistake she saw was perseveringly cherished, and while she carefully preserved it from her brother's knowledge, she resolved to do away with the delusion when opportunity offered.

CHAP. III.

A NATIONAL CHARACTER.



THE day but one after this conversation with his sister, Belnard fulfilled his intention of leaving Belvale. She was then at liberty to relate the explanation that had taken place, and Mr. and Mrs. Belnard, though truly grieved for the cause of their son's malady, yet trusted to time and his own good sense for his recovery.

With him they well knew a wound of this nature could not be slight; it was, therefore, with true satisfaction they

learned from his first letter, that his regiment had arrived from abroad, and had marched for their quarters in the county of Durham, whither he already received orders to join them. Though this event deprived them of all immediate chance of his society, the justness of their own sentiments precluded every wish to obscure the vigour of his youth in the supineness of indolence and frivollity, and the blessings of parental solicitude ; the prayers of sisterly affection, and the best wishes of a friendly and now undeceived heart followed him to the place of his destination.

The routine of life now pursued at Belvale, though entirely free from ennui, afforded but little incident or variety. Moderate amusements abroad, rational plea-

sures at home, the avocations of domestic economy, and the active distributions of benevolence secured to its inhabitants the treasures of health and the blessings of contentment. To the establishment of Miss Arnault in their present family, there was now no obstacle; they considered her as a valuable addition to their fire-side, and such is the prevalence of habit, even to the eye and ear of the most critical observer, that though her manners had lost none of their originality, they ceased to behold the efforts of affectation in the uniform propriety of her conduct and sentiments.

In this enjoyment of the purest and most tranquil pleasures, an interval of two years and a half elapsed. The letters of Belnard to his sister, gradually became more en-

livened, and evinced that time had at least blunted the keenness of passion. If he sometimes betrayed that the image of Olivia still dwelt in his heart, it was a sad but not an unhappy impression; and as during that time no one circumstance had occurred to recall her memory or enable him to trace whether she yet existed, or if she did, what clime she inhabited, there was nothing to renew the sentiments which time had so long laboured to efface. Belnard still continued with his regiment, nor did he once in that period receive any solicitations to return to scenes which he exerted every mental and personal effort to forget. From old Maddox he regularly learned the transactions at Estlake Lodge, and if he sometimes felt a wish to indulge the contemplations, which from a retrospect of past events must arise, he fled

from the silence and solitude of his chamber, to the bustle and exertion of his military engagements.

But fate had in store for the inhabitants of Belvale, a blessing wholly unexpected, and which inspired the happiest feelings of the family with new and unknown delight. The brother of Mr. Belnard, after an absence of thirty-five years, returned to his native country, to spend the remainder of a very promising life in the well-earned enjoyment of ease and tranquillity.

Mr. Arthur Belnard was at the present period, at the age of forty-five, the first ten years only of which he had spent in England. His elder brother's marriage had so much excited the resentment of

their father, that to prevent his younger son from all intercourse with a man whom he had thrown from him as an outcast, he removed to Leipsic, where the boy he now considered as his only child, received a liberal and learned education. He had early discovered a passion for letters, and the assistance that place afforded to every branch of literary knowledge, enabled him to study with pleasure and advantage. Ten years passed in this retirement, when the death of his father turned the chain of his ideas. The elder brother, though an alien from the affections of a disappointed parent could not be cut off from the parental estate, and Arthur found himself at the age of twenty, without a profession, and possessed of only four thousand pounds.

Happily for him however, his literary

pursuits were accompanied by the son of a Dutch merchant, who with the riches of his father inherited his industry. Young Von Grueber possessed a plodding genius—the learning that once entered his head, remained there, but his ideas were heavy, and his frame inactive. His preference (for passion he had none,) was an eternal residence in a counting house, and the death of *his* father also, called him to fill that happy dignity.

Yet Von Grueber, when once accustomed to a mode of life, felt but awkward in a sudden change. The conversation of his companion Arthur, had supplied him at once with knowledge and ideas to understand it. The manners of his countrymen he found, in comparison, but as the dull ore when first extracted from

its bed of earth, when contrasted with the brilliant coin that filled his father's coffers. The simile had not, 'tis true, struck his imagination, but instinct taught him which to prefer, and he began to think how he might obtain it.

Though no sympathy of soul had ever clouded his brow at the reverse of fortune suffered by the man, who he certainly delighted in more than all other men, he, on beginning to wish for his society, began to recollect this event, and to consider how it might be turned to a double account. Some months elapsed without any plan being formed, but as during that time he every day, and perhaps more than once a day wished to see him, these wishes at last came to fruition. Amongst other letters of business, he wrote one to

Arthur Belnard proposing to receive his sum of four thousand pounds, and give him a proportional share in the troubles and profits of the house.

Young Belnard reflected much on this. His studies had become tedious to him; a wish to enter life and to share its pleasures, or even its pains, (for any thing is preferable to apathy,) had for some time intruded on the page of learning, and drawn him from the researches of science. He knew the dispositions of Von Grueber; the proposal, therefore, not the manner of it surprised him—from him he expected the dealings of a Dutch trader; but as the result could neither derogate from his own character as an Englishman, or lessen his patrimony as a younger

son, he resolved on making the experiment.

His answer was in the affirmative, on the provisional condition of certain preliminaries, to which Von Grueber having been accustomed to expect his compliance could make no resistance. Arthur Belnard took leave of his companions of the college, and in due time arrived at Amsterdam.

Von Grueber rejoiced to see him; for he said so; and Arthur found no difficulty in keeping all the conversation to himself. In describing his journey, he decorated the account with a few fictitious adventures, and on attentive examination, he perceived that his friend—*listened*.

His influence was now established :— A power so absolute over the mental faculties of his companion could never be shaken. Von Grueber smoked so fast that night that his tobacco box wanted a fresh supply, and he was even surprised at that event.

Thus it was, that Arthur Belnard became a Dutch merchant, and the gravity of his manners suited well the nation he had to *deal* with. The business allotted to him, though precisely that which Von Grueber most abhorred, was that which he most admired; he communicated with merchants of all nations, and drew a fund of entertainment from those very incidents which generally sink a common observer to dullness and insipidity. He laughed indeed, and laughed very often

but his features never betrayed the risibility that inwardly existed, and he soon found that his talents, learning and wit, were not lost to all the world ;——they made Dutchmen stare !

But the fountain of enjoyment, though perhaps in itself inexhaustable, was in danger of becoming stagnant for want of circulation : he was, in Holland, compelled to devour the produce of his own brain ;——nobody there could taste the flavour of it, and to get out of Holland he determined. Some vague reports of an extensive house in Lisbon, actually made Von Grueber start, and Arthur to compose his nerves again, proposed undertaking the dreadful task of learning the truth, by going to Lisbon and inspecting the books of the house in question.

The result of this expedition, was entirely favourable. The house was in no danger, but Arthur wrote very long letters which he knew would be a convincing proof of the fatigues he had to encounter. Von Grueber looked at these letters, and gave up his case for lost; he heard them read, and as he revived at the glad tidings, recollected what a fortunate turn his thoughts took, when they first turned on Arthur Belnard.

But Arthur, though he liked Lisbon better than Amsterdam, soon found himself at a loss for employment; the English there afforded him no gratification; they were neither dull enough to laugh at, or brilliant enough to laugh with; to Amsterdam therefore he returned, and Von

Grueber again said he was glad to see him.

This excursion, however, opened his way to many others:—Von Grueber traded to all parts of the world, and whenever any difficulty arose in the settlement of mercantile transactions, his thoughts having once been put into training, of course followed the track allotted;—Arthur Belnard was the person who always occurred on these emergencies, and had he ever indulged himself in unnecessary contemplation, he might often have recalled self congratulations in his fortunate election of a partner.

This progress of years and progress of success, confirmed the habit of preference contracted in scenes wholly different, and

much less congenial to Von Grueber's intellects, than the scenes he now daily sat in :——he made his will, and there being nobody to whom he could leave his wealth, that he wished so much to be wealthy, he left it all to Arthur Belnard.

But alas ! soon after this, fortune changed the smile with which he had hitherto favoured her protégé's in Holland. The incursions of the French on their neighbour's territories, advanced towards these peaceable people with rapid strides : some houses of eminence sunk in the national concussion, and Von Grueber on summing up his next year's accounts, found he was not quarter so rich as he had been the same period the year before. This event could not lower his spirits, but it affected his health :——he

died and was buried, and Arthur Belnard found himself heir to a great deal of trouble, and about twenty thousand pounds.

With this sum, considering the general calamity of Europe, he certainly had reason to think himself not quite unhappy; but he wisely resolved not to consider himself unhappy at all, and also resolved to leave this residence of care, for the more delightful regions of mental refinement. He remembered that he had a brother, and permitted his heart to expand to new-born sensations of natural affection. The settlement of his affairs was expeditiously completed, and at the age of forty-five he found himself landed in his native country, in full possession of perfect health, an unimpaired

conscience, and a fortune sufficient for his wishes.

A peculiarity of character, and an uniform independence of temper as much as of spirit, had kept him from marrying; his soul was not attuned to the nicer refinements of love, or if it had been, the land of Holland was not the land to mature them. He looked on women as a necessary part of the creation, and thought them very well in their own sphere:—as the companion of man and being made in his likeness, he deemed them entitled to much consideration; but their weaknesses were their attributes, and as such he indulged them. The vexations of matrimony he could not understand; that a man could quarrel with a woman was far beyond his compre-

hensions.—He pitied the sex without despising them; but the enjoyment he derived from their society, originated more in a vein of imagination, which perhaps might be termed burlesque, than from any idea of possibly receiving from them rational or solid enjoyment. He was polite—he was attentive—he was complacent—but in the gravity of his features, there lurked a something which the observer could not in words define, but which often impressed sensations far from comfortable.—Yet with illnature or satire, was as truly unacquainted, as ill-humour and the vapours; it was an inherent sportiveness of disposition, and whatever ridicule or consciousness of superiority might be attributed to his general manner, he freely

pardoned the weakness he could not feel angry with, and admired the merits he well knew how to estimate.

Such was the man who now approached the dwelling of Belvare. It had once belonged to his father, and he remembered it; but he knew not if his brother lived, or if he inhabited the seat of his ancestors. A few enquiries, however, in the neighbouring village, satisfied him in these points, and leaving his carriage at the inn, he obtained a direction through the fields, by which he soon reached the house.

The tumults of his mind in this moment, were wholly new to him:—he hesitated to knock, but his hand yielding to a sudden impulse commenced.

the attack, and collecting all his forces of spirit, he quickly found himself steady enough to prosecute his intended plan of *eclaircissement*.

“Is Mr. Belnard at home?” said he to the servant who opened the door.

“No, Sir.”

“Or Mrs Belnard?”

No, Sir;—but my young lady is.”

“O, she will do as well,” said he, stepping into the hall. “Now,” thought he, “the battle will be half over before the old folks come to the reinforcement.”

The man led the way up stairs and opened the door of a little drawing-room, which had been appropriated to the two girls.

“What name, Sir?”

“No matter,” he returned, and walked in.

Constance and her friend Ellen, were seated at a small table, placed opposite a window which they had opened to inhale the fragrance of some early minionette that blossomed in the balcony. They both arose at his entrance, and Constance advanced a few steps to greet his welcome. Again he called up his spirits and bowing in silence, took the chair the servant presented.

“ I am sorry, Sir,” said Constance, in a cheerfulness of tone that contradicted the word ; “ I am sorry, Sir, my father and mother are from home.”——

“ I was told so,” returned her uncle, speaking very quickly to get through ; “ but I requested permission to pay my respects to you, ladies.”

“ O, then, we are the more indebted to your politeness” she replied with a smile that went straight to his heart. He could have hugged her to his bosom with feelings that had never before found entrance, but again he commanded himself.

“ Mr. and Mrs. Belnard are fulfilling a melancholy duty ;” said Ellen. “ They

are attending, we fear, the death-bed of poor Sir Thomas Belnard."

"Duty;" repeated Constance; "yes, it is a duty;—but as to melancholy"—

"You do not admit it, I presume, Madam?"

"On proper occasions," she replied.

"And is not this a proper occasion?" cried Miss Arnault.—"Good God!—the unhappy man!—without one descendant to smooth the pillow of death!"

"That was his own fault," returned Constance; "but my mother is an excellent nurse—she will close his eyes with all imaginable skill."

“Incorrigible girl!” exclaimed Ellen;
“but believe me, Sir, she is not so unfeeling as she would persuade you.”

He wanted not the assurance, and a something of resemblance to himself in the manners of his niece irresistably seized his fancy.

“Sir Thomas, has, I suppose, incurred her displeasure?” said he.

“No,” returned Constance; “I never was angry with him for being capricious:—he has no enjoyment but his humours.”

“Has he not a large fortune?” asked her uncle.

“Yes; but it is grown musty by this

time—he is stuffed up in his arm chair laden with flannels one half the year, and the other half he don't go out for fear of being sick. Besides, he is so cross—but he cannot help that ; he is an old bachelor.”

“ Do you condemn all old bachelors, Madam ? ”

She looked at him, and half laughing, though blushing, with great archness replied, “ not always—when they bear their lot with resignation, as ”——

“ As who ? ” said he, smiling.

“ As you appear to do.—If you are one, you do not look very cross at the blunder I have committed.”

“If my looks betray my real sentiments,” said he in a trembling voice, “you could feel no apprehensions of my displeasure.”

She turned her eyes on him in surprize. “I fear,” said she, “you take seriously what I only intended for jest?”

He arose in confusion, and walked to a distant window.

Constance was really concerned, and after a few moments hesitation she followed him.

“Do you know, Sir,” said she, “I never suffer any one to be offended with me?—I shall beg your pardon.”——

“And my heart;” he exclaimed catching her to his bosom.—“The daughter of my brother is to me as my own.”

Astonishment was her first emotion! she drew back her head, and gazed earnestly at his features.

“My uncle?” cried she, in much agitation—“I do—think you are indeed my uncle;” and throwing her arms round his neck, she burst into a passionate fit of tears. Something rose to his throat; he felt almost choaking and staggered to a chair on which he sunk, holding her still in his arms. At length the tumult found relief;—they were the first tears he had ever shed.

Ellen witnessed this scene and fervently

participated in the feelings she beheld : she snatched the hand of Mr. Belnard and carried it to her lips.

“ Are you too my brother’s daughter ? ” he demanded.

“ Yes, yes ; ” returned Constance ; “ at least you must love her as well.”

He understood her meaning, and caressed Ellen with all the affection her companion demanded. “ You are a pair of charming girls,” said he, when he a little recovered. “ I should be almost tempted to regret that you are not my niece, but this little gipsey has abused me so prettily, that I shall find quite enough to do to make her dutiful.”

“ Dear uncle !” cried Constance, and again threw herself on his neck ; “ what a dear old bachelor you are !” and again she laughed and wept alternately.

At length composure was tollerably restored and his niece demanded of him question after question ? though still he refused to satisfy her till he first saw his brother. “ I almost dread the meeting,” said he ; “ for had I known the sensations you have created, before I left the Dutch boobies, I would have been half tempted to stay there.”

“ Ah, no ;” she replied.——“ You have no idea how happy I shall make you : I will roll you in flannels, and nurse your swelled foot, but—dear uncle !” and

again she embraced him ; “ I will never close your eyes.”

Ellen started !—“ they are coming ;” said she :—“ Mr. and Mrs. Belnard are returned.”

“ Go, go, then, to that window ;” cried Constance to her uncle ; “ hide your ugly face, for if they recognize it too soon, they will be quite frightened.”

He obeyed—she and Ellen snatched up their work, and were busily employed when the old gentleman and lady entered. Mr. Arthur Belnard looked earnestly at both, but catching the eye of his brother hastily turned from him.

Mr. Belnard was surprized ; he would

have spoken but the singularity of the salute made him hesitate.

“How is the invalid?” asked Miss Arnault.

“Better;” was the reply.

“Will he die? Ma’am”; cried Constance.

“What is the matter?” said Mrs. Belnard; “something surely has happened? you have both been crying?”

Constance could no longer command herself.—She ran out of the room.

“What is the matter?” repeated Mrs. Belnard. “Has any news of my son—.”

“None,” answered Ellen, bending over her work.

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Belnard, moving to the window where his brother stood; “perhaps this gentleman can inform us.” He looked full in his face, and saw the emotions which agitated him.

“I ought to know you ;” said he, “my father cut me from the ties of affection, but——”

Evasion was now vain.—Nature burst from her long concealment, and triumphed over time and absence. The scene was deeply solemn and affecting, and Mrs. Belnard and Ellen as if mutually inspired by the same impulse, embraced each other, and wept their congratulations.

But transports such as these cannot long continue. The new found brother was claimed by a sister, and Mrs. Belnard soon understanding a hint from her husband, took Ellen with her out of the room, and left the manly minds to express their regrets for the past, and hope in the time to come.

Constance had given unlimited indulgence to her tears, and the fluctuation of her spirits subsided : she wanted only her brother's presence to render her the happiest being on earth. This she found was not long to be denied ; Sir Thomas had not been so ill as he had desired Mr. Belnard to be informed ; but severe pain had sunk the haughtiness of his temper. He sent for his relations to speak about their son, and before they

left him, he obliged them to write, and summons him from his regiment, which the old barronet affirmed he would take care he should never join again. This latter point was not now disputed; to Charles only belonged this task, and his return to his family was now anticipated with an hundred fold delight.

But even had affliction intruded through the medium of Sir Thomas, it must have been severe indeed to check the joy that this day reigned triumphant at Belvale. Mr. Belnard had explained to his brother all his pains and all his perplexities, and learned in return, that his father's forgiveness had not been denied; it was only delayed till too late for him to receive it in person.

This intelligence increased the general happiness of the truly happy assembly and when Mr. Arthur Belnard met the smiles of his niece and the warm attentions of his brother, his sister, and even of Miss Arnault, he felt that worlds could not have too dearly purchased such felicity.

CHAP. IV.

A STORY.



THE only event wanting to complete the bliss of the inhabitants of Belvale, was granted to their longing expectations by the end of a week. A chaise drove up to the door, and Colonel Belnard springing from it, was received with tears of unfeigned affection and delight. He had known nothing of his uncle's arrival, and but for one circumstance would not even have supposed him in existence. An introduction now took place with every testimony of affection on both

sides, but the remembrance of that one circumstance crimsoned the cheek of the young Colonel, and gave to his salutation a glowing warmth, which added grace to his native dignity, and animation to his ardent expression. Mr. Arthur Belnard beheld him even more than he had been described, and gloried in the children of his brother almost as much as if they had been his own. From Miss Arnault he also received the embrace of a sister, and he was delighted to perceive that the ideas she had formerly entertained were now entirely obliterated.

On that evening Charles, accompanied by his father and uncle, went on a visit to Sir Thomas; but he only was permitted the honor of an interview, which continued about half an hour. His

countenance, on returning to the gentlemen, announced vexation; the old Baronet had desired him to return to his former apartment, and again become the inhabitant of a mansion from which he had once fled in disgust, and ever considered disagreeable; but at such a time to be compelled to leave his father's dwelling where cheerfulness reigned in her most delightful form, was a severe trial of patience. To Sir Thomas, however, he owed much, and hesitated not to comply with his requisition, but his father and uncle loudly murmured at it, and the latter from the bottom of his soul, most fervently wished the old churl safely deposited by the side of Von Grueber.

But the Colonel had a very serious cause of apprehension as well as of mor-

tification: the hints dropped by Sir Thomas pointed to a wish for his marriage, and they even pointed to the election of the person he was to marry. Lady Fanny Sayer, a girl of fourteen, just escaped from the nursery and immersed in scenes of dissipation, was deemed worthy to fill the place which Olivia had occupied in his heart: but however successful might have been the efforts he had made, to "*pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,*" he now found that the irritations of those wounds his peace had so long suffered under, only made them bleed afresh. An involuntary comparison of the perfections he had lost, with those now offered to him, brought in full view the image of Olivia; and though he had fled from every retrospect that could bring her back to his

remembrance, the very idea of another claiming the affections which he had once bestowed, now discovered to himself that he had not yet recovered possession of them. Sir Thomas made no enquiry into the character of the wife he had chosen for his heir; the very recommendation he required was the only one she could boast;—she was related to the lady he had himself once loved, and distantly resembled her in features.

This circumstance increased the force of the impression the sight of his uncle had recalled. It presented to his view the scene where he first beheld Olivia; the heroic firmness of her undaunted but feminine spirit, her steadiness in the path of duty, and her contempt of personal evils incurred in its pursuits. Her

persevering and undeviating rectitude, the dignity of her manner, the sweetness of her voice, the elegance of her figure, the captivation of her address.—“ I must forget her,” said he.

But Charles had in truth deceived himself, in supposing he had ever forgotten her. The trunks which had been sent to Estlake Lodge, still lay unclaimed; and the return of Marcella to England, he had dwelt on as a fountain of hope. He had not yet given up the expectation of tracing Olivia, and while the possibility that she yet lived remained to him, he had unwittingly cherished the belief that she yet lived for him. The period assigned for Marcella's return was distant only a few months, and he well knew that any information she possessed respecting

her sister she would willingly give to him.

This concurrence of incidents revived every dormant wish and almost every dormant hope. Though disappointed in being compelled to desert his father's house and associate with infirmity of temper as well as of body, his spirits imperceptably regained much of their elevation, and a fluttering at his heart inspired his actions and countenance with renewed vivacity. At a late hour that night he took leave of his friends till the morrow, and his uncle followed him to the house door.

“What a serene and unclouded sky!” cried Charles; “will you come part of the way?”

“With all my heart ;” his uncle replied : and taking his hat from the servant, they both leaped the paling into the fields, and leisurely pursued the path towards the castle.

This was an opportunity that no stoic could resist, but Belnard was not a stoic, and seized it with avidity. He asked a multitude of questions, all of which definitively led to the relation he most anxiously panted to hear, and he quickly succeeded.

“I have visited the four quarters of the globe,” replied Mr. Arthur, to a question from his nephew. “East and West Indies, Africa, South America, and many parts of Europe.”

“ I almost envy you your adventures ;” cried Charles.

“ Yes—I have had a good many, and some very curious and interesting.”

Poor Charles felt all his long abandoned palpitations return ; but he still pursued.

“ Have you then been as valiant in the service of Cupid as of Plutus, and risked your life to obtain a prize which sordid riches cannot purchase ?”

“ No, by my soul ;” he replied. “ Excepting once ; I never saw the woman I would risque my little finger for till I saw my own niece. She resembles myself so much, and rallies her sentimental companion with so much roguery, that

I almost fancy myself her father in good earnest."

"The exception must then have made a great impression?" said Charles, with difficulty.

"Yes;—comparatively speaking, I never knew what it was to feel before."

"In love! by my laurels!" cried Charles, in a tone of romance that concealed his chagrin.

"Love?—no. — She was not the woman I could love; though she was the only one I ever adored."

"What a distinction!"

“ A very just one. With all the attractions of a woman she had the soul of a divinity.”

The heart of Belnard was again enchained, and Olivia gained possession of it in the fullest splendor.

“ The circumstance,” resumed his uncle, “ not only at the time called up all my compassion and interest, but the remembrance of it has never ceased to give me the most painful concern. I will relate it to you, though I may with truth assert that it is a subject which harrows up all my feelings.”

“ I sailed for Batavia, on a very important mission, from my sprightly fellow usurer ; but on arriving in that port, we

learnt that a fever had broke out in the city, and as it too often rages with fatal violence, the captain of the ship recommended me not to venture on shore. We accordingly cast anchor in the roads, and as it fortunately happened to be the interval between the rainy seasons, we had no reason to complain of our situation. The heat of the day, as is the custom in those countries, we passed in sleep, and the nights we enjoyed traversing the deck; and as the ship belonged to us, and was large and commodious, the captain and I found ourselves quite comfortable."

" Thus circumstanced, we were one night as usual walking the deck, when we perceived a little vessel approaching: she neared us in a very short time, and a white handkerchief was hoisted in token

of peace. The salutation was very little to our fancy, but supposing it a canoe with provisions and setting our people on the watch to guard against thievery, we permitted them to come under the lee-side. We had seen that the figures were clothed in white, but conceive if possible my astonishment on discovering that three of them were females, and apparently Europeans."

"Had plague, pestilence, and famine come in this shape, we could not have hesitated. One of the ladies reclined in the end of the canoe, supported by a second, and the third stood in an attitude of supplication which we easily comprehended. A chair was instantly brought on deck, to be lowered for their convenience in bringing them up the side,

and I descended in it to give welcome and assistance."

"Then it was I began to feel,—not love but admiration. The standing figure was neither too tall for grace, nor too low for majesty, and the expression of her countenance left no room to examine the regularity of her features."

Charles exulted in Olivia !

"She addressed me," continued his uncle, "in the Portuguese language, and I understood her. She asked me to receive and protect her mother, her sister, and herself? and I promised every thing she demanded, and all we could give. The fair pleader then consented to leave her mother who was ill and unable to

move without assistance, to my care, and was herself raised up and received by the captain on deck. The chair was again lowered for the invalid, who, she had only left for the purpose of being ready to aid her above."

"In a word, we got them all on board in safety, and removed the sick lady with much difficulty into my cabin, where she swooned away. Her eldest daughter had provided for this emergency; she mixed some drops in water while her sister bathed the fainting mother's temples in an agitation infinitely more apparent than that which my fair pleader betrayed; but in her there was a solemnity that excited sensations yet more oppressive. At length the inanimate form breathed heavily, and her charming daughter ever present to

herself bad us retire, lest too sudden a return of recollection might again overpower her senses."

"Till this moment I had in fact lost my own recollection. I was all astonishment! but this timely command restored me entirely, and taking the captain by the arm we returned to the deck. Here again a new surprize awaited us: the sailors had taken up a box from the canoe, and expected the two black men who managed it to follow; but the moment they had fastened the box in the cords they slipped their little skiff from the side, and rowed away with a velocity too great to be prevented. The sailors hailed them to no purpose and the strangeness of the incident from commencement to ending excited indescribable curiosity."

“ On the second interview I found that the eldest daughter spoke French, and in that language we afterwards conversed, but neither her mother or sister ever willingly spoke, and seemed to have left the disposition of every thing to her management. Day after day I continued to see her, yet no solution of the mystery appeared, and such at length became the excess of my anxiety to learn something of who these strangers were, from whence they came, or to whither they were going, that I ventured to boldly ask the questions. She told me they had been *some* nights at sea in the canoe, but the weather being fine they only suffered from the excessive heat of the mid-day sun. She evaded mentioning the place they came from, and I could only form conjectures that they

had escaped from one of the French prisons in the settlements to the north. I mentioned this supposition but instead of denying or assenting to it, she asked my advice on the best means of procuring a passage to any part of Great Britain?"

“ Finding I was thus baffled, I could only content myself with the gratification of rendering them every service in my power. A small neutral vessel, then in the bay of Batavia, I knew was about to sail direct for London, and in this I undertook to procure them a passage. The affair was soon concluded to their satisfaction: I sent every thing on board that could contribute to their comfort and convenience, and finally announced that they were to sail in two days. Their gratitude at this intelligence, and the

care I had taken for them was unbounded: the mother prayed for the preserver of her children; the younger daughter caught one of my hands to her lips, and the elder in pressing the other conveyed more than language could define."

"I was sorry to lose them, for the interest they excited might with truth be termed almost insupportable! I would have sacrificed any thing—every thing for them that only depended on myself, and would have accompanied them to England but the entire of the cargo was entrusted to my care, and nothing but insanity could justify my leaving it. I thought that my astonishment and anxiety about them was incapable of being increased, but the morning of their departure I found myself mistaken."

“I was walking on deck with the captain, when the two young ladies suddenly emerged to view and informed me that their mother requested to speak to me. I obeyed :—she was sitting on the bed prepared for her removal, and with a faint smile expressive of gratitude and anguish, she begged I would sit beside her?”

“I will not attempt, Sir,” she said, “to explain the feelings you have excited. They are indeed much greater and more complicated than you are aware of ; but to the weight of obligations you have already heaped upon me, I would yet add another, and if possible a more important. Can you then, Sir, preserve inviolably the secret I wish to entrust you with ? or dare you make a promise with the most distant possibility of falsifying it ?”

“The solemnity with which she spoke, might well impress the most abandoned villain of the necessity for absolute compliance. I satisfied her easily of my secrecy, and had not an unfortunate event absolved me from observing it, you, Charles, should still remain ignorant.”

“She then proceeded”——“my story
 “is a strange one, and I have in many
 “circumstances of life, been very unfor-
 “tunate : but I dare not murmur!—hea-
 “ven has spared me the blessing of chil-
 “dren in whom are concentrated every
 “virtue that can adorn, or make human
 “nature valuable. I hope I am grateful
 “for my girls, and that in their future
 “happiness my past miseries may be ob-
 “literated! yet to leave them subject to
 “suspicions of guilt:——to let the eye

“ of censure rest on them ;——to leave
 “ them to encounter their own justifica-
 “ tion without the means of doing so
 “ appals my soul, and has compelled me
 “ to deviate from one duty that I may
 “ be enabled to fulfill another.”

“ And now, Sir, I will briefly come to
 “ the point.——I am dying——my fate
 “ has already been pronounced, and I
 “ die not by the stroke of malady, but
 “ by the stab of a poniard.”

“ I started in horror; and she resum-
 ed.”

“ Careless of life as I certainly was on
 “ my own account, I was yet anxious to
 “ preserve it for my daughters. Their
 “ situation was dangerous, and while
 “ strength yet remained to me I effected

“ and shared their escape ; but whenever
 “ and wherever my death shall occur,
 “ a discovery of the means may implicate
 “ and leave them subject to the very
 “ laws in which I now seek to obtain
 “ their protection. To guard against
 “ the consequence therefore, I have
 “ adopted an expedient which if you ap-
 “ prove and will assist me in, may ob-
 “ viate all difficulties.”

“ Again I urged my earnestness to
 obey, and she desired me to write as she
 would dictate.”

Mr. Arthur then proceeded to repeat
 the words of the oath which Charles had
 himself perused and continued:—

“ She took up a small prayer book

that lay beside her;”—“believe me, Sir,” said she, “that I swear truth, and do “you testify for my children!”

“She threw up her eyes——O, God! shall I ever forget that moment?——my sight was dazzled; I fancied that a circlet of glory shone round her head——she uttered something, I had not senses to hear, and—kissed the book.”

“And now, Sir,” said she, at once descending to mortallity,—“now comes “your task.” “I made no hesitation to sign my name to the truth of what she had sworn, and she continued,”

“You have already told my girls that “you are to remain here some time; but “should you return to Holland, and

“ should they apply to you for protection,
“ will you visit England to accord it ?”

“ My emotions were too powerful in that moment to be resisted. I dropped on my knees, and snatching the book from her hand, swore with more devotion than I ever knew myself capable of, that my life and fortune should be theirs !”

“ I am satisfied,” she returned, “ and if
“ the expiring breath of a grateful mother
“ can draw down blessings on your head,
“ you shall be happy !”

“ To describe——but why do I speak of describing ? I am sorry I began this story, for I shall be miserable for this week to come ;——in short I put them on board the fatal ship, and dear Charles

—they were lost !—I made every enquiry to convince myself of the truth—and found it too—too certain.”—

Mr. Arthur could not articulate the conclusion of his sentence—and after a few minutes of silence, he caught the hand of his nephew—bade him good night, and turned home.



CHAP. V.

A STORY.



FORTUNATELY for the young Colonel, Sir Thomas had gone to rest before he arrived at the Castle. In the present state of his mind he much required solitude and reflection, and he knew that his meeting with the old baronet, would probably be followed by an altercation on the subject which had in the morning been introduced.

In this supposition he was not deceived—Sir Thomas the next morning at break-

fast, avowed his impatience to see the heir of his title and fortunes married, and settled in the family mansion. He professed himself weary of living alone, and acknowledged that he believed he had mistaken the road to happiness: he would therefore go among his relations and live like them, for all the money he had been saving, could not keep away gout or spleen, and though he had not been so kind to his friends as he might be, he knew they would forget and forgive, if he showed them he was willing to make amends.

Belnard's astonishment was succeeded by pleasure; but alas! this was quickly chased by a confirmation of his fears. Sir Thomas again spoke of Lady Fanny Sayer, and in the most positive terms de-

clared, that he had set his heart on the match, and he would not be disappointed. Words ran high; the Colonel was steady against yielding his hand, and at length, to end the dispute, he avowed that his affections were already engaged.

“Without my permission or advice?” interrogated Sir Thomas.

“I confess it, Sir, and even without my own,” was the reply.

This proved decisive. The old man in the rage of disappointment, swore he would never throw away one thought on such an ungrateful object, and restored Charles to liberty, by dismissing him his presence.

However severe the mortification, the benefit far outweighed the pain. The young Colonel directed his steps to Belvair, and once more joined the circle which in his absence had suffered a cruel reduction of its happiness. With these beloved friends, he endeavoured to lose his memory of the past, and sought by every effort of philosophy and reason to enjoy the present.

Some weeks elapsed in uninterrupted harmony, and he continued tolerably successful in supporting an external cheerfulness. In this interval, he had called once at the castle, but was refused admittance. He therefore wrote to Sir Thomas a full and respectful declaration of his sentiments and resolutions: he appealed to his reason if it could be expect-

ed that a girl of fourteen, like Lady Fanny, who was devoted to show and admiration, would give up all these for a man she would marry only for an establishment; and represented in glowing descriptive how different would be his state and that of Sir Thomas himself, if the plan of life he had proposed could be realized by a woman of matured understanding and decided character; who would marry from motives of affection, and who would secure to them peace and happiness at home, and support respectability rather than parade abroad.

This address proved more successful than he had expected. In a few days after, Sir Thomas desired to see him, and growlingly told him he might marry the girl if she answered the description he

gave of her. By degrees, however, his illhumour abated; he betrayed great delight at the contemplation of the prospects Charles had opened to his view; and finally desired that the affair might be concluded as soon as possible, as he had himself thought of changing his way of life so late, that if there were many more delays something might fall out to prevent it entirely.

“Where is this woman?” said he.

The question was a thunder stroke to Bernard. He hesitated—and at length contrived to answer, “he did not exactly know.”

“And were you waiting for my consent to look for her?” Sir Thomas snarlingly demanded. 6 5

Belnard rapidly replied, that since he had obtained, he would directly avail himself of it.

“ Yes,” said he, as he returned home across the fields ; “ yes—some inward warning urges my pursuit. I will not yield to reasonings against probability, while a possibility yet remains. She certainly loved me, and when she finds the perseverance of my attachment, she will permit me to overcome the obstacles that have hitherto divided us.” “ O, Olivia !” he exclaimed, “ may this indeed be ? may I believe that you will one day tread with me this path ? may I again hear the sound of your voice ; again behold those eyes turned upon me with that expression which I understood before your own heart had explained to you its sentiments ?”

But to brave the raillery of his uncle, and encounter the arguments and regrets of his father and mother, by avowing that he had so little overcome a passion so fatal to his repose, was an affrighting idea. He thought of how he might elude it and at length resolved to alledge as an excuse for his leaving them, that Sir Thomas insisted on his giving up his commission, which in the present situation of his regiment he might do with honor, and that to settle this affair it was necessary for him to go to London. This had in truth been one of the articles of peace between him and the old baronet, and the rejoicings at Belvale on this account, were as lively as sincere.

It was now that Mr. Arthur avowed the subject on which his niece and he had

lately so many private conferences. Constance had seen but little of England, and he proposed a tour which would afford equal improvement and pleasure, and the plan of which he had already laid down. Mr. and Mrs. Belnard, Constance, Ellen and himself were the party; they were to stop in each place worth stopping at as long as they thought fit, and so proceed the circuit assigned them. This trip would in every respect be advantageous, and as it was now the middle of May, they had every reason to hope that nothing might interrupt their amusement, or occasion any disappointment.

These plans already arranged were soon determined on, and to the great delight of Constance and Ellen, the day was fixed for the commencement of their ex-

cursion. Belnard, however, could not submit to delay, and resolved on setting out the next morning, giving them his promise that when he had finished his business he would join them wherever they might be.

That night he dreamt of Olivia. He thought himself wandering through the streets of London and she suddenly rushed into his arms. The shock awoke him ! —“ good God !” said he, “ perhaps she is in distress ;—perhaps the protection that Lewis demanded for her she in this moment requires from me.—”

The idea was dreadful !—a cold damp bedewed his forehead, and he almost fancied he heard her voice calling him in terror.—He sprung from his bed and

threw open the window; all was calm and serene; no breath of air moved the leafy branches, and no sound broke the dead silence of the night but the distant murmur of the river's fall. He closed the window and endeavoured to compose himself, but to sleep was impossible; and so forcibly had his fancy brought to his sight the image of Olivia that he could with difficulty persuade himself it was not real.

He commenced his journey early, but by the time he reached Staines, the evening was advanced, and he was there informed that Hounslow Heath was infested by a gang of footpads, who had made great booty. No consideration could however prevent his going forward: he ascertained that his pistols were in

good order, and again springing into the chaise desired the postillions to merit a large reward.

The horses flew, and when they got out of the town he drew from his pocket the little case that contained the necklace, and also the picture which he had some time before with severe anguish torn from his bosom ; but he had never commanded sufficient resolution to personally abandon it ; he always kept it about him, and now for the first time broke the determination he had, during a considerable time religiously observed : he opened the case, again kissed the image, and replaced it next his heart. He now felt himself comparatively happy. The necklace he concealed inside his waistcoat, and taking a pistol in each hand,

he let down all the glasses in the full determination of preserving his treasure. But neither on Hounslow Heath or in any other place did he encounter danger, and finally arrived at his hotel before the clock struck twelve.

His dream, however, recurred with such force, that, though he resisted it sufficiently to retire to his chamber, he yet could not command himself to go to rest; he struggled against the influence of superstition, but in vain, and finally yielded to it by leaving the hotel. The streets were silent and deserted, and as he crossed the end of each he looked down, and stood to listen for the voice which he had almost persuaded himself to expect: all continued still and quiet, and perceiving at length that the sky lightened with the

grey of the morning, he returned to his temporary-home, his limbs fatigued, and his spirits dejected.

Day after day he pursued his search, and night after night ranged the streets, the public places, and the environs surrounding London; but successive disappointments were the only result, and these sunk heavy on his spirits. The letters of Sir Thomas were considerable aggravations of his distress, and the time now approached when his family in returning to Belvale, would expect him also to return.

This apprehension was realized even sooner than he expected. A letter from his father announced the welcome intelligence that his uncle had addressed Miss

Arnault, and was accepted : they were, therefore, hastening their return home to celebrate the wedding, which was already fixed for the next Saturday but one, and his presence was demanded as necessary to the happiness of that day. With this letter he also received one from his uncle, giving some directions relative to settlements and some other arrangements, amongst which there was a request that he would see surgeon Medforth, to whom had been left the care of setting Arnault Hill, and enquire what could be done to get the family out who then inhabited it, as Ellen had expressed a wish to go there immediately after her marriage.

To obey these last injunctions it was first requisite for him to visit Estlake Lodge, where all the papers consigned to

his care on the death of Mr. Arnault had been removed. Since his return from the north he had denied himself that melancholy gratification, but his mind had now lost its spring, and he joyfully seized the apology to break his resolutions.

He went.—The house appeared in excellent order, and old Maddox, with much vanity, boasted of his care. The Colonel had good reason to believe it; the gardens and grounds were in great beauty, and the lower apartments evinced the attention paid to neatness and regularity, but a secret motive confined him only to these rooms. Happily he had much to employ him in the time limited by his uncle, and found little leisure to devote to reflections, as injurious to himself as they were futile. Arnault Hill

had been left by the late tenant a week before, and surgeon Medforth promised to inspect the preparations for the arrival of the bride at the expected period: his business at the Lodge was, therefore, soon concluded, and he was compelled to hasten his return to London, to complete the execution of those commissions entrusted to his care. Success crowned his diligence and exertion, and before the specified interval elapsed, he was prepared for his journey.

From the scenes he was now going to witness he recoiled with terror, and sensible of the alteration of his appearance, and the unconquerable depression of his spirits, he was tempted to deny his expected presence at Belvale; but ashamed of his weakness, he resolved to overcome it, and accordingly left London the morn-

ing previous to that fixed for the wedding.

* * * * *

Aware that the settlements he carried with him were that night to be signed, he commenced his journey at an hour so early, that he reached Belvale even before they expected him. In his first meeting with these affectionate friends, and during a part of the evening, he forced his spirits into a noisy gaiety that betrayed, rather than concealed the reality. His mother frequently looked at him in surprise, and his sister with the most painful concern; but he was so intent on supporting the character he had assumed, that for some time he did not perceive them: at length his eyes caught theirs; the struggle could no longer be sustained,

and unable to bear the sensations that in the instant so impetuously returned, he arose and left the room.

Constance followed him to the apartment in which he had taken refuge: she intended to sooth his emotions, but her own for him became too powerful; she threw her arms round his neck, and her tears expressed the affections that glowed in her bosom for a brother. He was infinitely affected, and the enthusiasm of gratitude now added to the feelings which so acutely wrung his heart, obtained for him the relief his aching eyes demanded. He withdrew from the carresses of his sister, and reclining on the arm of the sofa, gave free indulgence to the salutary weakness.

“Leave me now, Constance,” said he,

“ I shall soon recover myself, and will not, I hope, again relapse; but I beseech you my sister, my kind friend, do not turn your eyes on me with that affectionate expression! I cannot bear it; and if you and my mother would have me support myself as I ought on this happy occasion, you must not let me suppose that you commiserate or even remember what I have endured.”

The efficacy of this request appeared to her; she directly left him, and he became sufficiently composed to attend the summons for supper.

On entering the parlour he found the hint he had given was particularly observed; no eye was turned towards him, and the conversation was pursued with

much spirit. Constance was describing the situation of Waltheim in the most ludicrous manner, and affirming her uncle would soon learn that if one wife is good, two must be much better; and Waltheim would then appear an object of envy. "It is a great pity," she added, "that your modesty, and Ellen's blushes prevented you going to the assembly at Bristol the night I took my leave of it. She, at least, might have learned how to govern, and you to submit; for the poor fellow only just spoke to a lady, and because she happened to be a very lovely woman, his two wives carried him away: not only out of the room, but out of the town."

"How do you know that?" asked her father.

“ Her skeleton admirer, Forfair, told her;” answered Mr. Arthur.

“ No;” she replied, colouring with anger; “ I dislike him so much, that he dared not speak to me. But I recollected to have seen the lady, though I could not think of her name, and when I wanted to find Waltheim in the pump-room to ask who she was, I learned he was fled.”

Mr. Arthur rallied her on her aversion to Mr. Forfair, who he averred was so much pleased at it that he intended her a visit at Belvale, and was certain of a good reception. Constance, however, warmly asserted the contrary, and severely reproached her uncle for forming an intimacy with a person who had acted as he

had done to his only brother, and the honor of his family.

But suddenly she became thoughtful and absent; she heard or saw nobody, and when her uncle continued the subject, he found she did not even hear him. The effervescence of the party was lost in this change, and they soon after separated.

In the loneliness of his chamber, Bernard now sought refuge from the constraint he had so painfully suffered, and dismissed his servant the moment he went to it: but a soft tapping at his door interrupted his reflections; he opened it, and Constance entered; her countenance much disturbed, and her manner agitated.

“ I only came to ask,” said she, “ if

you still have the little picture you once showed me?"

"Surely——I have."

"Let—let me see it?" she rejoined in a hurried voice. He drew it from his bosom in a tumult that he could not account for; and eagerly snatching it from his hand, she held it to the light with the most scrutinizing attention.

"Yes;" said she. "I knew I had seen her before."

"Seen!—seen who?"

"The original of this little gem;—it was from her Waltheim——."

Belnard caught her explanation, and losing all power of strength, he sunk on his knees, and his head rested against the edge of the table. Constance in terror would have flown for help, but he held her gown to detain her, and in a few moments asked for "water."

She brought him a glass, but in raising his head to take it she was doubly alarmed at the ghastly colour of his face. He grasped her hand to prevent her leaving him, and after many attempts succeeded in swallowing some water. He could then rise from his knees, and obliging Constance to sit beside him, he at length recovered himself sufficiently to speak.

With the utmost steadiness, but in a low voice, he now strictly questioned her

of the circumstance; and she repeated what she had told at supper, in adverting to the situation of Waltham. She saw him speaking to the lady, and though her features were familiar to her, she did not, or probably would not have recollected the picture, if Charles himself had not brought it to her memory by his emotion when he was obliged to leave the room.

“Now, Constance,” said he, “you have restored me to existence! Olivia lives; she is in England, and if she has not forfeited her promise to me, I only am her destined husband. I go, my dearest sister, to claim her; and when I introduce her to my father and mother as their daughter, and to you as your brother’s wife, you will not only pardon, but

approve what hitherto has appeared my weakness."

"To-night!"—she cried; "surely you do not go to-night?"

"Surely I do," he returned: "and this very hour.—My dearest girl, spare all remonstrance?—My uncle cannot be offended when he knows on what account I absent myself at such a time, or can my father and mother be displeased at this precipitation. They have seen in part the state of my mind; you too know something of what I have suffered; and if you undertake to plead my excuse I am certain of their pardon."

"But to-night; Charles!—after the fatigue of your journey to-day?"

“ Let me ask you,” said he, “ what rest do you suppose I could enjoy?—Ah, Constance!—have I evinced so much indifference?”

The warmth of her own heart empowered her more fully to understand that of her brother's : she no longer opposed his resolution, and having received his instructions to relate the simple truth as his only apology, and his promise of writing to her the moment he was successful, she returned to her chamber, from the window of which, she in less than half an hour saw him ride by, escorted, at her request, by a second servant.

CHAP. VI

PERSEVERANCE.



IN possession of hope which now amounted almost to certainty, Belnard proceeded to Salisbury without once changing horses. He there threw himself into a chaise, and rapidly pursued his journey to Bath, which he reached at an early hour. From the hotel where he stopped, he instantly sent to the pump-room to learn Walthem's address, and wrote a line merely requesting to see him without delay ; in this however he was disappointed ; Mr. and Mrs. Walthem,

Mrs. Crank, and a large party of Lady Senegal's friends, were gone on a tour through Wales, and the servants knew not where a letter might be addressed to him.

Though foiled in this only means of obtaining the name of Onvia, he knew that if she still was in Bristol he must easily discover her: to Bristol, therefore, he proceeded, and the very hour he reached it, commenced his most diligent search.

During several days and nights, he continued it with unwearied assiduity, though without effect; but his hopes did not forsake him; he knew she was in the kingdom, and supposing she had removed to some other resort of fashion, he determined to range every place to which probability might guide him. H 5

He therefore gave the necessary orders for his leaving Bristol the next morning, and returned to the coffee-room, where he saw a gentleman with whom he was slightly acquainted, and they had just entered into conversation, when a voice near him caught his ear; he turned to look, and almost instantly recollected the pretender to Marcella. He would at once have addressed him, but the gentleman to whom he had himself been speaking, also recognized, and familiarly shaking his hand, demanded the success of his expedition.

“I was just in time,” he replied, “I caught the fellow on board an American trader, and actually under weigh to go down the river.”

“A trader! and was his daughter with him?”

“ Yes by my soul ! and she may thank me for detaining her in England ; her life is safer here I can tell her, than in the wilds of America.”

“ So they say—and I almost thought so myself, for though he is a handsome man, there is great ferocity in his face. But where have you lodged him ?”

“ In the fleet ; though if I knew what his daughter knows—but no matter——”

Belnard waited no longer to listen ; he left the coffee-room, and in half an hour after was on his way to London.

Fortunately he encountered no interruption, and arrived at the end of his journey in time to make the enquiries

which he concluded must now be definite. From Piccadilly he sent forward his chaise to the hotel, and stepping into a hackney-coach, drove to the fleet prison.

Here his researches ended ; he described the person he had so long been in pursuit of, and learned that he was confined for a debt of twenty-five thousand pounds. That his name was Paullen, and on account of the greatness of the sum, he was not allowed the benefit of the rules ; but his daughter came to see him every morning exactly at ten o'clock, and remained always with him one hour.

Further enquiries were unnecessary, and as he did not chuse to mention Olivia in any way, he returned to his hotel, armed with tollerable patience to wait for the morrow.

However slowly the hours passed away, the anticipated period at length arrived; he went on foot to the vicinity of the prison, intending to watch for Olivia, and discover her residence by following her. By this precaution he could obtain an interview and preserve her emotions and his own from public observation.

His expectations were soon realized; precisely at ten o'clock a lady dressed in black, her face covered by a thick muslin veil, turned from the corner of Ludgate Hill, and quickly walked towards the entrance of the prison. No disguise could conceal from Belnard the form of Olivia; but he commanded himself—he saw her go in at the gate, and continued strolling in view of it during the hour specified. She then issued from it, returned by the way

she came, and he guardedly pursued till he saw her knock at a door which was immediately opened to admit her.

In a few minutes he himself knocked, and on inquiring for Miss Paullen, heard she was at home.

The maid ushered him into a back parlour ; he then sent up his name, and she returned to tell him that Miss Paullen would be down directly.

His sensations were in this moment tumultuous and confused, but a light foot on the stairs called on him for recollection. The door opened, and once more he beheld Olivia.

Apprehensive, — delighted, — agitated,

—he advanced to meet her ; but her salutation though familiar was careless ; she appeared perfectly at ease, and alas ! —perfectly indifferent.

“ I fear,” said he, suddenly retreating from her, “ I have intruded ? ”

“ By no means ; ” she affably replied. “ When did you come to town ? ”

“ Late last night. ”

“ Then I am much indebted to you,” she returned, “ for this early visit. ”

“ Good God ! ” exclaimed Belnard ; “ am I thus addressed as an utter stranger ? ”

She coloured deeply and hesitated——

“ shall I speak candidly to you ?” said she.

“ Ah Olivia !” he answered ; “ I little expected this reception :—my peace has already been the sacrifice.——”

She put her finger on her lip in token of silence and her eyes assumed a wild luster ; “ hush—hush— !” she interrupted ;——“ if you mean us to be friends, no more of this !”

But instantly she recovered herself, and repeated her question ?

“ Certainly ;” he replied. “ I must listen with respect.”

“ That only is what I ask ;” cried

Olivia with quickness; "I will this once be candid. In any other circumstances, Colonel Belnard, your attentions would do me honor, but situated as you and I are, I cannot again pardon you if you offer them. Remember what you owe to yourself and your family, and ask no more to see me."

"Heaven and earth!" he exclaimed in amazement; "to what may I attribute this?"

"If I am inflexible," she replied, "I ought to be so. I once believed myself bound by strong obligations to withdraw from you; these obligations are now doubled——"

"Obligations!!!" he interrupted——
 "What obligations?"

“ Surely !” she answered with much impatience, “ I need not so often repeat it.”——

“ No,” cried Bernard ;—“ again I will not ask you to repeat it—you heal the wound which you inflicted.”

He walked across the room two or three times, and snatching up his hat, he bowed and hastily departed.

On issuing into the street, he turned up to St. Pauls; several persons stopped to observe him, and he happily perceived it; a coach was in the instant offered, and by this means he escaped further remark.

“ Where to, Sir ?” asked the coachman.

“ Any where—to the Tower——”

His eyes burnt in their sockets, and his temples beat intollerably ; but a little time assuaged the anguish, and brought him to himself. On reaching the Tower, he desired to be driven back, and to the hotel which he had left in the morning with very different expectations.

But to lull the first transports of agony was not to eradicate them : he had learned that the obligations which had formerly blasted his prospects, were now doubled. He also, however, learned that these obligations did not originate with herself ; from the situation of her father he firmly believed they now as formerly arose, and however inexplicable her sentiments, her conduct had been uniform.

Her sense of duty obliged her to follow the fortunes of a father she beheld with terror, and it might also impose on her the necessity of not now deserting that father when he was in distress: yet the single expression of her eyes, when she commanded him to silence, plainly indicated that though given up, he was not forgotten. “ Shall I then,” said he, “ abandon her, because I think myself so justly offended?— Shall I leave her possessed of so many external attractions, in a situation surrounded by danger, without any protection but that which she personally commands?”

Of this self permission, or rather excuse to remain near her, he availed himself. Again he left his hotel, and his steps involuntarily led towards the residence of

Olivia. A coffee-room situated nearly opposite her lodgings, struck him as a place of refuge where he could watch every person that went in or came out of the house, and seating himself in the most convenient corner, he fixed his attention on the opposite door. Very soon after it opened, and the maid servant earnestly looked up and down the street, appeared disappointed, and retiring, shut the door: but in a few minutes, again returned evidently in expectation of some person. Belnard's anxiety and attention redoubled, and his supposition was soon verified; after repeatedly looking out, an old gentleman, apparently a citizen, spoke to her. Belnard persuaded himself they talked of Olivia.

They continued for some minutes to

converse, during which, the woman often looked back, as if afraid of somebody within; she at length hurried away, and the old gentleman crossed directly to the coffee-room. Belnard's blood rushed through his veins, but he kept quiet, and the old man sat down at the same table; writing materials were brought him by the waiter, and he dilligently set about composing a letter.

After much labour he contrived to finish one of half a dozen lines, which he read as many times over: he sealed it with much care and then addressed it; but while writing with one hand he placed the other as a screen and all Belnard's efforts to obtain a sight of it were ineffectual.

The important work thus finished he

called the waiter, and throwing down a guinea desired it to be changed for a seven shilling piece and the remainder in silver. He was obeyed, and taking the little piece of gold with the letter in one hand he hurried the silver into his pocket, and left the room.

The conclusion of this adventure was exactly as Belnard's fears had suggested. The maid servant soon after appeared and the old man in passing her, slipped the letter into her hands.—She looked about carelessly, and retreating, shut the door.

To obtain this letter, and prevent it reaching Olivia was now the task;—Belnard knew not what step to pursue, but a moments consideration told him

that by increasing the bribe he was certain of getting it from the person to whom it was intrusted; and he could easily prevent a repetition of the offence by returning it to the writer with appropriate accompaniments.

Very soon after, the maid came out of the house and went into a grocers shop at some distance. He waited till she reappeared, and then spoke to her;—she remembered him without hesitation, and with much smartness asked him how he was?—his answer pleased her, and he led to the subject of the letter which he told her he knew of, and that he would reward her with two guineas, if she let him have it, instead of the person to whom it was addressed.—He showed her the money, and with much disap-

pointment she confessed she had already given it to Miss Paullen.

“ And what did she say?” he demanded, in a tone of curiosity.

“ She will answer it directly.”

He then repeated his offer if she would give the answer to him. With this she gladly complied, and desired him to walk up and down the street till she brought it.—

In a few minutes he again saw her; he seized the little packet with one hand while she took the money from the other, and bore away his prize. Eager to examine the contents without observation he turned into Bridge Street, and gained

Blackfriar's Bridge: one of the recesses was unoccupied and, here, leaning over the battlement, he ventured to inspect his purchase. Besides a letter, there was a card which to his great surprise he found written on as follows——

“ Miss Paullen presents her compliments to the
 “ gentleman who wrote the letter accompanying
 “ this, and requests he will accept her excuses for
 “ the very unguarded breach of propriety she has
 “ committed: she believed the letter addressed to
 “ herself, and opened it; but finding by the con-
 “ tents it is intended for another, she has again
 “ sealed and returns it by the bearer.”

Repeatedly he perused the lines.

“ How like Olivia!” he exclaimed.
 “ The calm dignity of her character is
 invariably the same!”

To deliver the card as it was directed, now remained. He returned to the coffee-room and took his former station, where he continued the whole morning watching the door; but in vain.—Resolved, however, not to let him escape he remained on his guard of duty, and having called for dinner, had but just concluded it when the object of his vengeance appeared, slowly traversing the opposite side of the street.

Instantly he sallied out: seized the recreant by the arm and drew him aside.

“Who are you watching for?” he demanded.

“Why sure!” returned the old cit with

a twang,—“I must not tell you that.——”

“I already know,” replied Belnard;
“and have the answer for you.”

He gave him the card; the old wretch with some surprize examined it, and looked up at Belnard, but saw no encouragement for a parley.

“Read it Sir!” commanded the enraged Colonel.

A pair of spectacles were adjusted to his nose, and he contrived to read it through, but with evident disappointment.

“Why—” said he; “here is all a mistake——!”

“ Yes !” returned Belnard ; “ on your part it was a mistake !——you thought the lady without a protector, but if you do not now understand from me that she shall not be insulted with impunity, I may find a way to teach you a lesson that will bring you to your senses !”

“ How now, Sir !” cried the old fellow.

“ Peace, miscreant !” Belnard returned——“ here is your letter ; and (tearing it) in this manner will I rend your soul from its decayed habitation if you ever again incur my resentment !”——

He found his passion too strong for controul, and walked away to avoid any act which by making the affair public

might subject the name of Olivia to general notice.

For three successive mornings he resumed his post, resolving to prevent the repetition of a circumstance in which Olivia had borne so characteristic a part; but finding she not only omitted her visits to her father at the accustomed hour, but did not at any time leave the house, he began to fear that illness had occasioned her confinement, and the first favourable opportunity he resolved to make new enquiries from the servant.

This soon offered—he saw her go down the street—followed and spoke to her; but her replies were sulky. The sight of his purse however brought her to good humour; she informed him that

Miss Paullen had taken some freak in her head, and without saying a word about it or giving any reason, left her lodging at a very early hour the morning after the affair of the letter. "But," added the woman, "I had sense enough to follow the coach, and saw her safely housed; so if you make it worth my while I can tell you where to find her."

Belnard lost no more time. He instantly ascertained the residence of Olivia, and judging that at this hour her visit to her father was already past, he thought he might with safety reconnoiter.

He soon passed the watch-maker's shop to which he had been directed: a bill for lodgings was in the window and a thought struck him!—here he was not known,

and with a little caution had no doubt of success in his hasty formed plan.

He went into the shop and asked what apartments he could have? the man replied, he feared none that would suit him; there was only a bed-room; adding, that it was very comfortable.

With much appearance of particularity, he enquired what other persons lodged in the house and who in the next apartment as he was obliged to study many hours in the day, and quietness was his first object.

“Then, Sir,” said the man, “perhaps you may like the room. There is a lady in the next, who in every respect is proper and well conducted, and who on

first coming gave positive directions that no person who enquires for her, or no letter addressed to her should be received. Her father is unfortunately in the Fleet and on that account she don't chuse to be disturbed herself, so of course will not disturb other people. The gentleman who holds the first floor is out of town and we do not expect him for a month or two."

Belnard professed himself quite satisfied without examining the chamber: to secure it he paid a week's rent in advance, and promising to take possession the following morning left the house to reflect on this singular and happy event.

CHAP. VII.

A LOVER'S CARE.



DELIBERATION but confirmed the design he had so suddenly adopted, and the next morning at the hour in which he knew Olivia would be with her father he repaired to his new lodgings, provided with a suitable parcel of books, and the new name of, Moore. Every thing turned out to his wish, and before her return he found himself comfortably settled. The house was old fashioned and the rooms only divided by thin partitions; but though small and cheap, his chamber

was tolerably furnished and perfectly clean, and he was under the roof with Olivia.

While the servant, a decent looking old woman assisted him in adjusting his books and settled his cloaths she expressed her sorrow that he had not the next apartment, which was much larger ; but it was taken only two days before by a young lady, who had a right no doubt to what she paid for, and who for certain had seen better days though she was as easy attended as any one ; but the poor thing had a father in prison for debt, and took on sadly, for every morning her eyes looked dull as if she had been crying instead of sleeping.

A footstep on the stairs fortunately

called the woman from her subject. Belnard listened—heard the soft voice of Olivia and clasping his hands in gratitude and delight, thanked heaven that he could now guard her in perfect security.

Day after day he found reason to rejoice in this arrangement. Olivia went out every morning and no weather prevented the regularity of her visits to her father; but at these times he never lost sight of her till she entered the prison, then watched for her coming out, and followed her home. Twice he saw her addressed by a young gentleman of fashionable and dissipated appearance, but he did not appear impertinent, and only pursued her to the limit of the rules; and several times she was seen into her lodgings by persons who came out of

the prison at the time she did, but they kept at a distance and seemed actuated by curiosity only. Nothing, however, to cause him serious fear of insult occurred, and he was now convinced of what he had hitherto believed, that the most profligate ruffians may be compelled to respect the virtue they do not understand.

In this manner a month elapsed, during which Belnard had only once left his charge to get his letters from the hotel. By these letters he learned that his uncle and new aunt were already gone to Arnault Hill and most anxious to see him there, or even to learn where he had hid himself. One also from his father and mother conjointly, felicitated him on his recovery of Olivia and most affectingly entreated their new daughter to

hasten the meeting with a family who would receive her as their pride and blessing.

Belnard dare not reperuse this letter, and fear of a repetition of this appeal prevented him in part from again seeking new intelligence from home ; but anxious at length to learn something of those friends who he so well knew were anxious for him, he went one evening to obtain any letters that might in the interval have been left at the hotel.—He found a large packet, and amongst them one from his father which contained the following passages.

“ I know not how far your heart may at this
 “ time be open to impressions of joy, but the
 “ melancholy gloom with which your fate has lately

“ overshadowed us, has in part been cheered by
 “ the happy prospects of your sister. The only
 “ man who ever, I believe, made a serious im-
 “ pression on her heart, has risen as I may say from
 “ the dead and is come to claim her hand, Mr. For-
 “ fair, whom she treated with so much dislike
 “ avowedly on account of his brother, surprized us
 “ with a visit the day after your uncle and aunt left
 “ us ; and to our indescribable amazement was
 “ accompanied by that brother whose supposed fate
 “ she had so sincerely lamented. Constance is un-
 “ equal to disguise, and her emotion at seeing him
 “ suddenly before her, betrayed the sentiments he
 “ had come to sue for. He has already received my
 “ approbation and your mother’s, but Constance,
 “ herself, has declined any positive acceptance till she
 “ knows your opinion, or at least till she receives
 “ the sanction of your judgement and knowledge
 “ of her lover, which we all believe to be favourable
 “ as even Forfair himself can wish. He is indeed
 “ a charming young man, and returned crowned
 “ with laurels and promoted to the majority of a
 “ regiment now on a home station. His brother

“ has made him large amends, and evinced by the
 “ generosity of his proposed settlements, that the
 “ motive of that petulance his intended sister dis-
 “ played, has secured to her his true and warm
 “ affection.”

“ Sir Thomas has applied to me for intelligence
 “ concerning you ; but alas ! I could give him none.
 “ I had hoped indeed, that having never, even in your
 “ boyish days, assumed a stern authority, my claims
 “ of *friendship* might in mature years be admit-
 “ ted.—Why my son have you disappointed me ?
 “ why are you thus concealed from us ?——do you
 “ think we will betray you ?——ah, Charles ! your
 “ candour—your firmness, are gone—! I dare not
 “ comment further on this mysterious affair.——”

This intelligence of Constance yielded
 him the greatest delight he was now
 capable of enjoying. In all the range of
 his acquaintance at home or abroad, he
 would have selected young Forfair as the

most amiable man, the most attractive companion, and the most capable in every respect of giving happiness to a girl so seducingly gay, yet so solidly principled as this tenderly beloved sister. But the implied reproach and pathetic regrets of his father wounded him to the soul!——to answer them was immediately necessary, and he hoped to succeed in confirming the happiness he could not share, and in calming the apprehensions he could not remove.

Again by a circuitous rout he returned to his lodgings and knocked at the door which was instantly opened by the old woman.

“O, Sir,” she cried, “Is it only you?——I was in hopes it was the young lady.——”

“Young lady——what lady?”

“The lady above, Sir.——Her father is dying, and has sent for her.——No wonder, Sir, you are frightened;” she observed;—“I was frightened myself.”

Belnard recollected himself. “Perhaps,” said he, “I can give her some assistance;” and instantly turning, with rapid steps he pursued his way to the prison.

Happily, however, his imagination suddenly presented the risque of now being seen by Olivia, and he stopped to consider. If she discovered his residence in the same house, he would be precluded all possibility of continuing his guardianship, and probably incur her severe displeasure.

To watch at a distance as hitherto was more than ever necessary, and as he moved forward, he reflected on the steps that ought to be taken.

To learn particulars of the circumstance was first requisite, and he resolved to apply to the turnkey as before for information.

But accident gave him the intelligence he wanted, without his asking any direct questions. On obtaining admittance inside the gate, he found a group of prisoners speaking with the turnkey, and from the first words he perceived the subject of their conversation was that which he came to hear. He listened, and one of the group observing his curiosity, willingly recommenced the story.

He stated that Governor Paullen (for such was he termed) and two other prisoners, had been in the habit of spending their time together; that they gambled in some way which called the attention of the marshal who put a stop to the affair; and deprived of this resource of amusement, they adopted another:— they drank brandy for a wager, and the governor being remarkably fat and short-necked, was suffocated.—

“What?” exclaimed Belnard—“already dead?”

“Yes;” replied the informant; “when his daughter came to him she thought he was alive. She ordered every body out of the room, and sent for a surgeon who used all probable means for his re-

covery, merely to satisfy her, but all in vain ; and as the surgeon says the body must immediately be buried because of the closeness of the weather and the numbers now confined here, she is giving directions about the funeral."

" She must make haste then ;" said the turnkey. " The gates will be locked in two minutes."

A buz of confusion at the door round which a crowd had assembled, now drew the speaker for further intelligence, and Belnard would have followed, but he caught a sight of the muslin veil which Olivia always wore. The crowd made way for her, and she approached the gate attended by a gentleman, who the turnkey said was the surgeon. The dusk

of the evening easily enabled Belnard to conceal himself.

“ I am sorry, madam,” said her attendant, “ for your sake and my own, that I cannot have the honor of attending you further.”

Olivia had drawn her veil close about her face to render the shade more impenetrable ; but in this instant she threw it back and presented her hand. Belnard dared not to look, but he heard her voice faltering and solemn.

“ I hope, Sir,” said she, “ you will believe me grateful ; and if ever we again meet, permit me to claim your acquaintance.”

He gave no reply to her compliment, and she added, with yet more touching expression—"Adieu—adieu!—heaven reward you!"—and passed through the gate.

"Charming woman!" emphatically pronounced the surgeon.

Belnard waited not to hear another comment. He followed to guard his liberated treasure, and the gloom of the evening permitted him closely to pursue.

Instead of knocking at the hall door she went into the shop, and through the window he continued to observe her. She spoke to the man who called for lights, and when they were brought he attentively examined a watch he held in his

hand. He said something to which she replied, and then going to his desk took papers out of it, which he gave to her.

“She has sold her watch!” exclaimed Belnard, in agony; “perhaps to bury her father.”

For some moments she continued speaking to the man, who bowed as if in compliance; he then opened the door leading into the hall, and called aloud—
“Margaret.”

To prevent any suspicions that he followed, Belnard walked up and down for some time: at length he knocked, and old Margaret immediately letting him in, he asked if there was any news of the lady?

“ Lord, yes, Sir ;” Margaret replied ; adding the circumstance he already knew, and wonder that he did not find her.

“ I ought to have recollected before I went out,” said he, “ that I had never seen her.”—He passed on, and up stairs to his chamber, followed by Margaret with lights.

“ I did not tell her yet, Sir,” said the old woman speaking low, “ that you went after her, so good natured. She was so white and so sick when she came in ! —I wanted to get her some wine, but she said no ; she would soon be better.”

“ You ought to take good care of her ;” he replied. “ But don’t say any thing now about me, since I can be of no use.”

She promised compliance, and left him. He paced the room, intently musing on the recent occurrences:—Olivia in such a situation!—without one friend!—without money!—his soul sickened at the retrospect. He threw himself on a chair, and leant his head against the wainscot in deep thought—a sound caught his ear—he listened, and distinctly heard convulsed sobbings. In that moment he was capable of any act of madness, but again he recollected and kept quiet. The sounds became less frequent, and in some time she rang her bell for Margaret, to whom she spoke as if giving directions. The poor woman seemed to offer words of condolence, to which no reply was given, and on her leaving the room again he heard the door locked. Margaret then came to enquire if he had

any more commands for her that night?—she held a letter in her hand, and he involuntarily asked who it was for?

“For some gentlemen in the prison, sir,” she replied.—“I believe it is money to pay for the funeral—for my master has promised to see that all is done right.”

Belnard took the letter, read the address to, “Surgeon R——;” and with as much carelessness as he could assume returned it, saying, he wanted nothing.

The whole night was by him passed in reflection. He now congratulated himself on having preserved his concealment, and easily deducing from circumstances that to surgeon R——, Olivia had in-

trusted the care of her father's remains, he saw that on that account his interference was unnecessary. To draw Olivia from her forlorn and deserted situation was his first and only concern; and he knew that both Ellen and his uncle would on the slightest intimation, hasten to offer their mutual favourite that assylum which she now might accept, and more than ever required.

CHAP. VIII.

A FIRE.



ACCORDING to this determination, therefore, Belnard in the morning wrote to his uncle, briefly, that Olivia had lost her father, and much wanted a friend ; entreating Ellen to come immediately to London, and carry from it the once beloved companion, whom she had so long wished again to meet. He added his request for an answer by his messenger, appointing at what time he might expect their arrival at the hotel in Oxford-street, that he might be there to receive them.

To send this letter by a trusty express he was obliged to go to Oxford-street, and as he had no servant of his own in town, the waiter engaged to have an answer in the evening.

Satisfied of succeeding in this plan, his heart felt lightened of half its cares. Olivia would be under the protection of his family, and every obstacle to his wishes at once removed. Again he directed his steps towards his solitary residence, and in the way, called at the Fleet to ascertain what had been done. Apprehensive no longer of discovery, he inquired for surgeon R——, of whom he learned that a coroner's inquest had already sat on the body of Governor Paullen, and brought in their verdict "*died of excessive drinking.*" The deceased was immedi-

ately after fastened up in his coffin, and arrangements were made for his interment at the hour of seven in the evening.

The surgeon expressed his happiness at having been able in any way to contribute assistance to Miss Paullen, in an affair so shocking; and very candidly acknowledged his surprise, that a woman of such distinguished personal attractions, and such apparent elevation of character, should be so wholly friendless. Belnard replied that this subject of surprise no longer existed. The vices of the father had urged the daughter to conceal them from investigation, and as a sense of duty alone had urged her to share the misfortunes which she had often been solicited to evade, her friends now hoped their attentions would soon restore her

cheerfulness. He declared himself one of the most interested of those friends, and requested surgeon R—— to finish his kind office, for which he would in the evening call to return his warmest thanks.

On re-entering his lodgings, he found all was safe; Olivia had not been out; and certain now of her restoration to her friends and perhaps to himself, he suffered hope again to usurp its dominion in his bosom; and anxious to relieve the uneasiness of his father and mother, and to confirm the destiny of his sister, he wrote to her in a stile of felicitation that he knew must be successful. He earnestly entreated her to hasten the period of her eternal *slavery*, and expressed his dawning expectations that he might himself soon commence *tyrant* under the same laws.

The other letters he had received, he determined to answer that evening after his return from Oxford street and the prison, that nothing might for some time occur to divide his attention. The hour now approached for his going in search of his uncle's reply, and again he left his apartment. His first visit was however to the shop; the master stood behind the counter, and he asked to see some second-hand watches.——A number were produced, amongst which, was a plain gold repeater, with a seal affixed to the chain, that he instantly recollected from the impression on the letter he had once received from Olivia. The purchase of this he soon completed and with sensations of indescribable pleasure, left the shop, and pursued his way to Oxford-street.

Here he received the expected answer. It was from Ellen herself, and breathed all the sincerity of affection for Olivia. She told him his uncle had been suddenly called to Portsmouth on some business of great consequence to a foreign acquaintance, but would be back in less than a week, and cautioned him not to inform Olivia of the friend she was so soon to meet, that they might enjoy her surprise. She would herself, she added, be in London the next day by twelve o'clock.

Thus in every way successful, he with renewed spirits proceeded to finish all his intentions. He went to the prison which for the last time he entered, and again saw surgeon R——. The young man possessed much intelligence, and a pleasing address: but his greatest recommendation

was, that he had been serviceable to Olivia. To her father he had paid the last duties so far as was in his power, and Belnard with much solicitude, demanded if a friend could by any means alter his situation? His motive for the question was apparent, and excited much gratitude, but he with great pleasure heard that his offers of kindness were no longer necessary, as the prisoner expected his liberation on the next day, and was immediately to take possession of a very good establishment in the town of Buxton.

“Then, Sir,” said Belnard, rising, “I may hope at some future day to see you; but Miss Paullen has charged me with her good wishes to you, and hopes your acceptance of this tribute of gratitude.

It belonged to herself; gallantry will therefore urge you to value it for the sake of the former wearer."

He gave the watch into the hand of the young gentleman, whose astonishment kept him for a moment silent, and took the opportunity himself to escape all acknowledgements by hastily affecting his retreat.

To answer his letters, was now all that remained of the business he had assigned himself, and to this he applied directly after he had regained his apartment. Sometimes he heard the light foot of Olivia crossing her chamber, and exulted in the proof of his fervent and steady attachment which he was so soon to discover to her, and for which he intended demanding so large a reward.

By the time he finished his employment, the whole house was profoundly silent, and the hour far advanced. Apprehensive therefore of disturbing Olivia by moving about in undressing, and careless of every circumstance in which she bore no part, he merely slipped on his dressing coat, and throwing himself on the bed, soon fell into a deep sleep.

But from this he was most dreadfully awoke by a smell of fire, so suffocating, that he leaped from the bed in full persuasion it was in his room. A light under the door directed him, and on opening it, he beheld the stair-case in a blaze, and the black flames issuing through the opposite wall. In that instant, a horrid crash announced to him the destruction of part of the building;—

there was no time for hesitation ; he threw himself against the next chamber door, and bursting it open, Olivia rushed into his arms.

“ We cannot escape,” said he ; “ we must await our destiny ! ”

Terror was for the moment swallowed up in astonishment. She knew his voice, and with an exclamation, uttered his name.

The flames drawn by the current of air, followed as if in pursuit of them, and he pushed to the door with his foot.——
“ Yes, Olivia,” he replied, with solemn determination : “ in death at least, I am united to you.”

The light from the street, now glared

through the windows, and the door proved but a slight barrier against the devouring enemy ——Belnard's arms encircled Olivia ;—but she suddenly called for air, and taking her to the window, he forgot the danger, and threw it up.——The flames now rushed into the room with fury—the engines playing on the houses gave them some relief by throwing in a torrent of water, which cooled the burning atmosphere. Destruction closed in on them : in the calmness of despair, he pressed her closely to his bosom, and awaited the dreadful catastrophe.

But in the moment that death advanced with rolling vehemence, providence interposed to save them. A ladder was reared into the window where they stood.

—He caught the top with one hand and with the other raised Olivia to the window seat. She as if by magic at once recovered her recollection; with the firmest resolution, drew her wrapping gown closely round her limbs and stepped on the vehicle of preservation. A waterman had mounted to assist them; but Belnard gained a footing between him and Olivia, and while with one hand she steadily held the ladder, he grasped the other in his, and amid the tumult of the persons assembled below they nearly gained the bottom;—but within a few steps of it, Olivia sunk from her station and fell into his arms—he sprung to the ground and frantically exclaimed, she was safe!

Of this safety however she was in-

sensible, and appeared without signs of life. Belnard while he supported her really fancied she no longer breathed, and one of the military who beheld his frenzy, suggested the benefit of taking her into a house; his own he said was close beside, and leading the way down a narrow lane, Belnard followed bearing Olivia in his arms. They quickly reached the spot, knocked with violence and were instantly admitted by the good woman herself, who with much kindness and activity endeavoured to recover her guest. Olivia at length opened her eyes; knew Belnard, and his gratitude to heaven was unbounded!

But her recollection was long imperfect:—at intervals she recovered it, then again gazed vacantly and he again became dis-

tracted; pressed her to his heart and recalled her to reason by every endearing appellation. A burst of tears however most importantly relieved her; she gradually became composed, and spoke to him with an expression of tenderness that recompenced for all past sufferings. He kissed her hands, and wept the excess of his delight for her preservation, and the fervency of his thanks that she was preserved to him.

The good-natured woman of the house now recommended that the lady should try and get a little rest, and on Olivia willingly assenting she left them to prepare a chamber.

“ I am not yet indeed myself,” said Olivia. “ I know not how you were

sent to my rescue, but thank God——
you are safe——I must think of this
hereafter.”

“ May we both, my Olivia,” he cried,
“ live many, many years to talk over this
event as the happiest of our lives !——”

“ O, no! no!” she answered; “ if you
have generosity——honor,——forbear this.”

“ Great God, Olivia !——but when
you recover yourself we may explain.——
I now have a right to demand this.——”

“ My dear friend !” cried Olivia, pres-
sing her hand on her forehead ; “ cancel
not my obligations to you !——they are
more than I dare think of.——Destroy
not my head and my heart I beseech

you!——I am not now capable of resisting—of exerting, I would say, my judgment.”

“Dearest—beloved Olivia!” said he; “be composed.——You will this day be restored to your friends—to my family who are prepared to receive you as——”

“What!”—she interrupted; “what have you said?”

The expression of her eyes terrified him.——“you are not yet recovered,” said he, taking her hand——“you shall think of nothing—hear of nothing—till you are quite serene.”

The woman in this moment returned and apprised her that the bed-room was ready.

“ Thank God ! ”——said she——“ I shall have time to recollect myself !——adieu my dear—dearest friend—heaven reward you ten thousand fold ! ”

Her eyes looked alarmingly unsettled.——He was afraid to reply ; but perceiving she could not support herself, he again raised her in his arms and carried her up stairs to the door of her chamber. To the kind care of their host he there consigned her, and returned to the parlour where in a little time he had the happiness to hear that she wept excessively and sent him word she was much better. Flattered—consoled by this assurance, he readily yielded to the good woman’s proposition of breakfast ; he filled out himself a bowl of tea for his Olivia, and again had the happiness to hear that she was recovering.

The man of the house now returned. The conflagration was ended after consuming a range of old houses, which, being chiefly composed of wood, all endeavours to save them were useless. It began in the shop next to the house inhabited by Belnard, in which was a quantity of oil and turpentine, and the flames got a-head before they were discovered ; but no lives were lost, and the property was principally insured.

It was now past six o'clock, and full time for Belnard to think of what could be done for Olivia's appearance and his own. She had only time to slip on a loose wrapping gown ; he was in his dressing coat, and the smoke had not left either in a fit state for public inspection ; but he had preserved his purse and his

pocket-book ; and thus provided could be at no great loss. He easily prevailed on the man to go to the hotel for a change of clothes for himself, and the woman engaged to provide every thing the lady would want when the shops opened.

A few hours soon passed away, and all these trifling difficulties were overcome. Belnard was already prepared to go and meet his aunt, but apprehensive in Olivia's present state of spirits, that the sudden appearance of a friend might too much disturb her, he wrote to her, on a slip of paper, the following sentence :—

“ Can you admit the affectionate attentions of her
 “ you once knew as Ellen Arnault ? She comes to
 “ London for the express purpose of taking you from
 “ hence, as her most welcome and long wished for
 “ guest.”

The woman carried up this little address, and in a few minutes returned with a sealed note, which he found to be as follows :

“ You have given me a proof of your esteem,
 “ which, for the present, I most gladly accept. I
 “ have many reasons to think myself happy in the
 “ friendship of Mrs. Belnard, and am now convinced
 “ that the utmost of my wishes respecting you are
 “ fulfilled.

“ Allow me, Colonel Belnard, to hope for that
 “ place in your esteem, which a sister might claim
 “ with integrity ? while I think myself possessed of
 “ that, I may, without hesitation, sign myself ever,
 “ ever affectionately your friend,

“ OLIVIA PAULLEN.”

Belnard was confounded—new mysteries seemed to gather round him and frus-

trate his hopes, but this concession he dared not refuse. To obtain her confidence was the great necessary ; and this, by leading to a full and open explanation would, he trusted, clear up the heavy mists that continually darkened the brilliancy of his prospects.

Satisfied by the woman that Olivia was much better, and being also informed that she was preparing to receive the lady she expected to call for her, he hastened to prevent any delay of the meeting, by going directly to Oxford-street. Ellen was true to her appointment, and he was not deceived in the warmth of the interest she took in Olivia. While on their way to the city, he told her the heads of what had passed, and his belief that the rejections of Olivia had originated in a cause

which could not be irremediable, as she had proved herself disengaged, first by accepting Waltham, and afterwards himself. For her change of sentiments she had never assigned any reason, and he believed if he could win her to an open and unreserved communication of the principles by which she was now actuated, he might without difficulty remove them. This however could only be attained by degrees, and he resolved to forbear any solicitations from himself, or through his family, which could give her to suspect that he sought to teize, rather than persuade her to compliance.

Ellen understood these instructions and promised to be guided by them: soon after they alighted at the house in the lane, and heard that Olivia waited in the

parlour to receive them. Her first salutation to Ellen was warm and affectionate, and she would have thanked her for this kindness, but her emotions became too powerful, and throwing her arms round her neck, she hid her face in the bosom of her newly recovered friend. Belnard was much affected ! he would have clasped both in his arms, but recollecting his plan of conduct, he silently kissed the hand of each, and joined them together.

“ I am become quite a fool ;” said Olivia, smiling through her tears.—

“ This is not the greeting I intended to give you ; but dearest, dearest Mrs. Belnard, and again she threw her arms round her neck, your friendship is to me invaluable.”

A hint from Belnard urged Ellen to change the subject to something less interesting, and assuming a chearful tone, she said ; “ come, come, my dear girl ; I shall reinstate you in your old apartment, and one circumstance only shall again divide us.”

Belnard drew the woman aside, and very liberally thanked her for her humanity ;——Olivia silently curtsied her adieu ; she was pale and trembling, and he almost lifted her into the coach that waited.

At the hotel Mrs. Belnard’s carriage was already prepared to carry them to Arnault Hill. They got into it, and after a delightful jaunt of four hours, Olivia found herself in possession of her former

chamber, with more than a former welcome. Ellen never appeared to such advantage as thus mistress of her own house; and her manner, in losing the gloss of sentiment, had acquired much of the warmth of hospitality.

Belnard's continued assiduities were touching and delicate: the most indifferent observer could see the passion that glowed in his bosom, and melted in his eyes;—his manners to Olivia were soft and insinuating, but he never offered her a particular address. In the manner, not the action consisted the difference which marked the lover; yet he could not but perceive her repugnance to even this preference. She frequently turned from him with an expression almost of disgust, but though at the moment he might feel

offended, he soon again forgot every sensation but that which breathed in his soul, and gave animation to his existence.

It was now the middle of August, and the country in the highest state of vegetation. The plantations had considerably grown since the sudden departure of Olivia, and the air of gloom, which, from the habits of Mr. Arnault, the melancholy of the accident, and the influence of the season then prevailed, were now superseded by cheerfulness and contentment. While Olivia yet suffered from her fright, Ellen carefully preserved her from the fatigue of inspecting the improvements; but on the third morning after her removal, she proposed a walk, and accompanied by Charles, the two ladies strolled towards the gate.

“What a number of recollections,” cried Ellen, “does this scene bring to memory? but there was one in particular which gave a most shocking proof of the depravity of human nature!——Do you forget the story Jenny told us about this Lodge, the very day you went away?”

Olivia coloured deeply, and on Ellen repeating the question answered, “yes.”

“I have brought Charles to confession,” rejoined Ellen, “and learned that you alone were the cause of this seeming misdemeanor.”

“Me!” cried Olivia, in amazement.

“Yes; you; innocent as you look. Your brother-in-law, Lewis, told him

something about a dragon that was in pursuit of you, and so like another St. George, he swore by his valour to guard you from the foe."

"What a rhapsody!" said Olivia, with forced animation.

"Rhapsody it might be," returned Ellen; "for few young men, I fancy, would so far brave the suggestions of pride, the fears of censure, and the vexation of personal inconvenience, by taking up his residence in a cottage such as this, and for no other reward than the secret enjoyment of knowing he was on the spot, if you should want his protection."

"—I—I am sorry—," said Olivia,—she put her handkerchief to her face, and

Belnard, who had earnestly observed her, saw that she was unable to finish the sentence.

“What are you sorry for, my dear?” cried Ellen, mischievously.

“That—he should have been so calumniated——.”

“Yes,” rejoined Ellen; “it was a pity: but it has taught me a very good lesson. If ever again I am led to suspect him in error, I will at once tell him through what cause. Ingenuousness is absolutely necessary to perfect friendship—do you not think so?—”

“—In some instances——.”

“ But not all, I suppose? My dear girl, if you lean so on my arm, you will break it.—Let Charles assist you to walk.”

Involuntarily he stepped forward, but instantly recovering herself, she smilingly refused both.—“ I must not forget,” said she, “ my independence, even of friends.”

Belnard felt this acutely; he remained silent during the walk; and early in the evening, when Olivia happened to be out of the room, he bade adieu to Ellen, and rode home to Estlake Lodge.

Obvious motives of delicacy had prevented him taking up his residence at Arnault Hill; but he had as yet lost nothing of Olivia’s society by these occa-

sional absences. He was at the Hill ever morning before she came down to breakfast, and did not leave it till she had some time retired; this evening, however, he felt a depression of spirits that resisted all his efforts; and though Ellen saw and truly lamented it, she yet trusted much to the return of her husband, which she expected on the morrow night, and hoped he might form some plan which might prove successful in bringing Olivia to an eclaireissement.

She continued to ruminate on this subject till tea was brought in, and then sent up for Olivia. The servant, however, returned with an excuse; Miss Paullen was indisposed and could not come down this evening. Dissatisfied with this answer, she went up stairs to learn the

truth, and found Olivia had been shedding tears.

“What is the cause of this ;” said she, sitting down by her, and with much affection taking her hand. “My dear girl, you certainly suffer some terrible uneasiness?”

Olivia endeavoured to smile away her grief, but again it burst forth, and she threw herself into her friend’s arms.

“I wish,” resumed Ellen, “you would be candid.—Poor Charles would sacrifice his life for your happiness.”

“O, no ! no !” cried Olivia ; “do not tell me so—I cannot accept even his kindness.”

“Then confide in me—my inclinations at least——.”

“Dear, dear Mrs. Belnard!” Olivia interrupted—“talk no more in this stile! nothing is in your power—thank heaven I acted right!—but you must let me be gone?—I cannot indeed stay here.”

“You shall go if you so earnestly wish it;” replied Ellen: “but not till you have recovered your health and cheerfulness.—Charles is gone from us merely to hide his concern on your account.”

“Gone?”

“Yes, indeed;—he is gone to Estlake.”

“Shocking! shocking!” cried Olivia

—“ How dreadfully, though unintentionally, I have erred in coming here !”

“ Well, well,” said Ellen, “ let us talk no more about it for a day or two. Let us enjoy ourselves while we can. So, now, come down to tea ; I cannot remain the whole evening alone.”

Olivia willingly complied, and as her friend only spoke on indifferent subjects, she exerted her spirits to appear cheerful.

CHAP. IX.

ASTONISHMENT.



THE next day Charles did not visit Arnault Hill till dinner time. His manner to Olivia was then entirely changed, and the coolest politeness had taken place of the warmest assiduities. She appeared at once pleased and pained by it, and though her eyes often filled with tears, she yet supported her share in the conversation with unusual vivacity.

The morning had been excessively hot, and the ladies had not attempted to brave

it: but in the evening, when night darkened the hemisphere, Ellen, who evinced a sort of impatient restlessness for which Belnard only could account, proposed a walk to the mount, from whence they could hear, though they might not see.

Olivia went up stairs for her shawl, and on returning found her companions had got out of the window, which was about two feet above the lawn.

“The descent is steep;” said Belnard. “If you do not permit me to assist you, perhaps you had best go round?”

“You forget,” she replied, leaping to the ground, “that it is not many nights since I descended a tremendous ladder.”——

“ I know not which of you forgets it,” said Ellen. “ You appear to me to have quarreled, and will not condescend to tell each other for what. But come, come, this is creeping instead of walking.”

They soon ascended the mount, and the two ladies seated themselves; but Belnard was assailed by powerful recollections, and leaned against the great larch in front, that he might avoid trusting his voice which he felt would betray feelings that he now determined to conquer.——

“ I think,” said Ellen, at last addressing him,—“ I think, Charles, you must invite us to dine with you at Estlake Lodge; I am told it is quite a little paradise.”

“Is not this a carriage,” said Belnard,
“turned down the avenue?”

“You want to put off my question;”
replied Ellen, advancing to listen.

“The sound approaches,” he resumed,
—“it is certainly him——”

“It is!—it is!” cried Ellen, and
springing down the steep she darted away.

“Does Mrs. Belnard expect any one
to night?” asked Olivia.

“Yes, madam,—a gentleman who to
her is most welcome.”

“She appears indeed quite rejoiced.—
Shall we return?”

“As you please,” he replied.——“Ellen is a charming woman, and the warmth of her heart is richly rewarded by the affections of a husband who loves her with the utmost tenderness. Their meeting restores them to mutual happiness——!”

“Meeting!!!——Husband!!!”——repeated Olivia, in the greatest astonishment.

“Can you be surprized,” said Belnard, “that after an absence of only a week,—a wife should experience these emotions at again seeing the man to whom duty and inclination has indissolubly bound her?”

Olivia had stopped to hear him, and

pressed her hand on her eyes; but she now caught his arm and suddenly exclaimed—"O!—I die!"——

By a motion as sudden he prevented her falling, and supported her back to the seat with a solicitude from which were banished all coolness and reserve.

"Olivia!" he cried; "merciful God! what new torments are preparing for me?"

"O, Belnard!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands and eagerly raising her eyes to heaven.

"What does all this mean?——my Olivia! pray be calm—you terrify me."

She struggled much with her emotions.

—“What shall I say?” she cried, speaking very quick; “O, Belnard!”——and she gave both her hands into his.

He was astonished at the action and the manner of it, and gazed intently in her face to discover if possible the motive.

“Dear, dear Charles!” cried Olivia; and withdrawing her hands, she covered her face and burst into tears.

“Dear——” he repeated;—“dear to Olivia!”

She turned from him, and wept excessively.

“Alas!” he cried; “how soon is hope

raised and resolution overcome?——but you cannot intend this refinement of cruelty.——O, Olivia, you know not the fervency of the affections you have rejected.”

“ I have known—I do know ;” she repeated :——“ but I must recollect myself. ——To-morrow——to morrow I will explain——” and she started up to leave him.

“ Go——go——” he exclaimed ;——“ unfeeling woman !——enjoy the misery you have inflicted !——passion may now be entwined with my existence, but your triumph shall not long continue. I will conquer or die !——”

She instantly resumed her seat, and in

the same impassioned tone and hurried manner said,——“teach me——do you teach me what to say!——indeed I am unable to think for—to guide myself.”

He caught her hands with an eager grasp.——“Me?” he repeated——“does Olivia ask me to guide her?”

“Dear Charles!” said she; “I have been in error.——But if you can forgive me——”

“Speak!——”

“——I never——never again will form even a thought but as you direct.——In the sight of heaven I am and will be only your’s.”

Belnard at once lost all power; he

sunk against the back of the seat motionless and nearly senseless, but the sobs of Olivia recalled his fleeting spirits. He caught her to his bosom, sighed deeply, and gazed at her earnestly to be certain that it was really her.

“Speak to me!” said she; “I beseech you, speak to me?—I will leave you else——”

He shook his head, and pressed her more closely to his heart to prevent her escape.

“This is dreadful!” she cried; “O, Charles, if ever you loved your Olivia——”

A convulsive sigh swelled in his bosom,

and a burst of tears yielded him relief. "Thank God!" said he; "the struggle is over—happiness was not lent me for a moment—I shall yet live to enjoy it."

However fervent the flame that glowed in the heart of Belnard it was pure and delicate as that which animated Olivia herself. While his arms encircled her and his eyes in wondering delight dwelt on her features, he by the most passionate and endearing expressions demanded if he had heard right?—if she intended him no disappointment?

"Alas!" she replied: "I deserve your reproaches.—I ought to have remembered that you were incapable of a fault, and yet I imputed to you the blackest crimes. I was taught to believe that

before you saw me you were affianced to Miss Arnault ; and when I heard of her marriage through the medium of a person I had sent to make inquiries I thought that you—were——”

“ Her husband ?” rejoined Belnard.

“ Yes——”

“ Cruel !—obstinate woman.——Was not my manner to you sufficient proof of the contrary ? how severely shall you during your whole life repent having formed so degrading an opinion of *your* husband !”

“ That is not fair ;” she, smilingly, replied. “ My punishment has already been too great for my crime—and you ought to forgive me.”

“To adore you ! rather say. Will not the same principles bind you to me that urged you to destroy me?”

“What an expression !” cried Olivia.

“A just one, believe me. My passion, (I called it an infatuation) deprived me of all intellectual power ; the weaknesses I despised in others overwhelmed myself and I was fast sinking to—”

“Stop, stop,” said she, pressing her hand on his lips—“you shall no more remember this.”

Belnard was willing to promise all she could command ; but a footstep approaching startled her.

“It is a ghost,” said he, laughing, “that is coming to run away with you.—No, it is only Samuel I perceive.—”

Samuel in the moment appeared with a message from his mistress, that supper waited.

“We are going,” replied the Colonel.—But he first drew Olivia to the front of the mount, and pointed to Estlake Lodge.

“There is the residence,” said he, “again become your’s; which you will again inhabit—I shall see you the mistress of my house, hear you called by my name—O, Olivia!—how soon are these contemplations to be realized?”

By suddenly turning she escaped from

his arms and fled; but he as quickly pursued, and recovered his prisoner——

“All efforts are vain,” he cried; “the spell by which you are bound can never be broken”—“but,” he seriously added, “I have yet something to say to you.—I had promised Ellen not to inform you of who you are to see: no emotions, however, even of pleasure, shall now be added to those you have already experienced. Your mother little imagined when she consigned your safety to the guardianship of a Dutch merchant in the bay of Batavia, that you were one day to become the wife of his nephew.——”

At a glance she understood him, and when the first impressions of surprize and delight were abated, she eagerly

hurried forward to again behold her mother's kind benefactor; but Belnard would not let her escape from himself: lights in the drawing room attracted them to the window which still lay open, and on a near approach they saw Mr. and Mrs. Belnard in earnest and animated conversation; but Ellen's face only was turned towards them.

Olivia was again much affected. "Dear Charles," she cried, "this is too much happiness for one hour!"—

"Yet," he replied, "you have other and dearer relations, Olivia, who will greet you as a daughter—a sister——"

"Hush, hush!" she cried, "I cannot now bear to hear of them!——"

Belnard was sorry he had said so much. —He drew his arm closely round her waist, sprung with her to the window step, and entered the room.

“Do you know this lady?” said Ellen to her husband. He turned, and for a moment stood transfixed to the spot; but Olivia approached him, and he caught her to his bosom as a long lost child. He had been informed of her escape from death, and knew that to her was attributed the melancholy of his nephew, but the present meeting was quite unexpected and truly grateful to his heart. The sight was extremely touching, and the spectators were nearly as much affected as the actors; but the anxiety of Belnard to withdraw his Olivia from a continuance of agitation urged

him to whisper Ellen, who obeyed the hint and rallied the newly met friends with very good effect : and Mr. Belnard, to whom sensations of this kind were very tremendous, willingly returned to his usual vivacity.

“ I confess,” said he, “ I never was more rejoiced to meet any one in my life ; for though I have a dozen messages to you from Constance, I thought I must have advertized for Charles before I could find you.”

Ellen was frightened !—this she believed was touching a chord that would not bear so rude a shock, and the servant in that moment appearing, she gladly obeyed the summons by hurrying her companions to the parlour.

Charles took his usual place at table ; but with difficulty performed the honors of his station.—He was silent and appeared much oppressed.—Olivia's emotions were less solemn, but more various ; she frequently trembled and tears filled her eyes when she spoke or was spoken to.—During supper, Ellen, anxious to prevent Mr. Belnard openly expressing what she knew, by the lurking raillery of his eyes, he was thinking of, led the conversation to common topicks ; but when the servant had withdrawn she lost the reins ; for suddenly addressing his nephew, he said ; “ so, I find we are to prepare for another wedding in the family.—”

Charles involuntarily looked at Olivia, who bent her head very low.

“ Whose wedding ?” said Ellen.

“ I thought you were already informed ;” replied Mr. Belnard : “ for Charles being *one* of those principally concerned.——”

“ It is Constance,” said Charles, pained for the confusion of Olivia.

“ Yes ;” returned his uncle, “ but it was a letter from you that persuaded her to fix the day, on the express condition that you are to be present.”

Charles was silent.

“ When is it to be ?” asked Ellen.

“ On Saturday next.”

“ Good heaven !” she rejoined ; “ and this Wednesday night ?”

“ Surely.——One day is enough for the journey.”

“ This is wonderful news !” cried Ellen ; “ and yet more wonderful that you left your niece at such a time.”

“ I came for my wife like a dutiful husband ;” he replied : “ for though I did go a few miles out of my way on my return from Plymouth, to see our friends at Belvale, I assure you, I stopped but a few hours.”

Ellen gave him her hand affectionately.

“ I have promised for you,” he re-

joined, “ if I could find Charles; for without him there will be no wedding.”

“ Then we will all go ;” cried Ellen.

“ What says Olivia to visiting Belvale ?” asked Charles timidly.

“ I am not a party concerned ;” she falteringly replied :—“ therefore”——

“ But,” he interrupted ; “ if I prove that you are a party invited will you go ?”

“ I am out of the question,” she answered.—“ Settle the matter without thinking of me.”

“ I think, Charles,” said Mr. Belnard,

“ I can point out a way of accommodat-
ing all differences without making *Miss*
Paullen a *party concerned*.”—“ But these
women,” he added, “ fixing his eyes full
on Olivia, lead us such a plaguy round !
——I was near a month dancing after *my*
wife.”

“ A month !——you were fortunate,
Sir.”—

“ To have it over—faith I think so. It
is but a few words after all, and I see no
use in making a fuss about them.”

This speech was particularly addressed
to Olivia, who finding her shame and agi-
tation no longer to be concealed, arose
from the table,

“ Nay,” said he, detaining her ; “ upon

my soul you must not be angry with me."——

"——I——am not," she replied.

Charles could not bear this; he also rose, and releasing her from his uncle, conducted her out of the room.

" Good night—good night,"——said she.

" Do you leave me in displeasure?" he demanded.

She burst into tears.

" My own Olivia!" he cried in a voice of tenderness; " why this?"

" I don't know," she answered; " my

spirits are so weak to-night—pray let me go.”

The heart of Charles looked its thanks through his eyes; the tumult he witnessed he could delightfully account for, and pressing her hand in silent emotion, he gave her a light that burned on the table.

She smiled through her tears at him.—“Good night,” she repeated,—“I shall not be half so silly to-morrow.”

Apprehensive of increasing her emotion by uttering the reply that was on his lips, he remained silent, but his eyes were fixed on her till she disappeared, and offering up a short but fervent petition for her, he returned to the parlour

CHAP. X.

SUDDEN EVENT.



ON the following morning, when Olivia came down to breakfast, she found only Mrs. Belnard.

“ Our gentlemen have left us, Olivia,” said she; “ but your’s left with me this note.”

She took it in confusion, and retiring to the window, read these lines:

“ I flatter myself, my Olivia will regret my absence,

“ but a few hours will end it, I hope for life.—

“ These temporary separations are too painful to be

“ endured, at least by my own Olivia's long, very

“ long devoted and

“ Truly grateful

C. B.”

The two ladies breakfasted together, and when nearly finished, Ellen rang the bell, and ordered the carriage round.

“ Do not be frightened,” she added, laughing; “ I am not now going to Belvale ; but will you pardon me for leaving you the whole morning ?”

Olivia in truth wanted no society, and saw her depart without a murmur.

At four o'clock Mrs. Belnard returned,

and hearing her guest had passed the interval alone, she went to her.

“ I have had a busy time of it,” said she; “ but luckily there is yet an hour to dress, before these men return.” “ You, perceive,” she archly added, “ have made preparations according, but that mourning darkens half your charms.”

Olivia blushed, but offered no reply; and Ellen went to her own apartment.

By five o'clock, the two friends again met in the drawing-room, but their expectations of the gentlemen's return, were for more than an hour disappointed. At length a carriage was heard rolling through the gate, and Ellen ran out to the porch.

The voice of Belnard soon asked for Olivia, and on receiving a direction, he hastened to the drawing-room.

“Are you glad to see me?” said he, advancing with a serious air, and holding out his hand for her’s.

She replied only by yielding it to him, and smiling with bewitching grace.

“And not inclined to punish me absent without leave?” he rejoined.

“Not now that you are returned.”

“You are an angel,” said he in a tone, full of meaning.

Mr. and Mrs. Belnard now entered, and

the latter demanded whose elegant chariot he had borrowed?

“My wife’s,” he gallantly replied, leading Olivia to the window. “How do you like it my love?”

She turned her eyes to meet his, which were bent on her with melting tenderness — “surely,” said she, “this is unnecessary.”

“For happiness,” he interrupted, it is; “but not for convenience.”

“You must be richer than I thought,” said she.

“Perhaps I am. But I could not very handsomely carry you to my sister’s wedding in a hired chaise.”

“ You are fanciful to-day,” she smilingly replied, and released herself from arm.

Dinner was then announced, and the conversation of course became general : but it had not been many minutes concluded, when a gentleman on horseback passed the window towards the porch.

“ It is Doctor Filmer,” exclaimed Charles, hastily ; “ I beseech you, uncle, go and receive him.”

Mr. Belnard laughed—“ shall your aunt also go to receive him ?” said he.

“ Yes, yes,” returned Charles—“ pray, pray, go !”

“Come, Ellen,” cried his uncle—“we are, I find, completely turned out.”

“What is the matter,” said Olivia, in surprise, as they shut the door.

Charles laughed and blushed;—“I am half afraid to answer you, Olivia,” said he, “though——”

“Though what?”

“In doing so, I make a request, on your compliance with which depends not only much of my happiness, but also the happiness of my family.”

“You are too solemn,” she returned.

“No,”—answered Charles, drawing his

chair beside her's ; " I am aware how much my petition may surprise delicacy, but certainly cannot wound it ; and necessity is an excuse which I hope *Olivia* will not refuse to admit."

" What is this important question ?" said she.

" It is a *request*—not a question ;" he replied—" I will lead to it briefly.—My sister has accepted the addresses of Major Forfair to whom we are all anxious she should be united ; but while she was uncertain of my happiness she refused to confirm her own. She has declared that although the day is already fixed she will yet recede unless I give her my presence ; and I am determined *Olivia* not to leave you "

“ You are not serious surely ? ”

“ Assuredly I am ;——and the concurrence of circumstances is such, that to my sister the delay of her marriage may prove extremely unpleasant.——”

“ But why delay it ? ”

“ The answer to that question rests only with you.——I certainly will not leave you, and yet Olivia, your going with me as my-promised bride, would incur your feelings——”

“ Why do you name such an impossibility ? ” she hastily interrupted.

“ To convince you,” he replied, “ of the propriety of my request.——Will you

be startled when I tell you I have already procured a licence?"

"For what?" she demanded in astonishment.

"For our union, dearest Olivia! and—to-night."

"Now, indeed," said she, "you jest!"

"Upon my honor, I do not.—The step is sudden but not precipitate;—my family have long wished for it, and known the object—! why, my Olivia, are you thus agitated at what after all must be?"——

"Yes, yes;—I know—but not now—not this evening.——"

“Name one solid objection?” said he, earnestly looking in her face—“I promise to submit to it if——”

“I cannot—cannot think of it.—
Pray cease this vain argument.”

“In what is it vain?” cried Belnard, with renewed earnestness; “by going there as my wife.—”

“Why will you talk so?——”

“Because it must be so, Olivia—It cannot otherwise be settled.—As my wife you at once escape the bridal parade which to a woman of your dispositions must be exhausting: my father and mother receive you as their daughter, not their guest—my sister——”

“ Pray be silent,” she faintingly interrupted—“ I will not hear you——”

“ My sister,” he resumed, “ embraces you with gratitude for at once making her brother and herself happy.—Can you, Olivia, resist so many powerful reasonings by one so futile? and which in the end must still cost you much anxiety to get over.——”

“ But I am not expected.—I will not go as an intruder.——”

“ Dare I ask you?” he replied—“ I dare not for my own sake. Belvale and its inhabitants are prepared for festivities; their reception of you therefore even in externals will admit of the forms of

respect, which individually as Olivia, and doubly as Olivia Belnard.——”

She put her hand on his lips, and turned from him.

“ Have I then conquered ?” he cried, pressing it fervently——“ you have now given me this hand, and not the force of thousands shall compel me to relinquish it !”

“ Shame, shame !——cried Olivia ; thus to urge impossibility.——”

“ Ah, Olivia !” he returned : “ must I owe to another a concession which I have not influence to obtain for myself ? read this letter from the united hand of my respectable father and mother ; and

which I received when in my solicitude to protect you from danger and insult I dwelt under the same roof and followed you in your daily visits to the prison that contained *your* father."

She gazed at him in the utmost amazement.

"Did you think," said he, smiling seriously, "that a supernatural power carried me to the dreadful scene where *in death we were so nearly united?*"

"O, Belnard!" she cried, clasping her hands in the most energetic gratitude—"am I indeed so largely your debtor?"

"And yet, Olivia, you refuse me a few days acceleration.——"

She turned her eyes suddenly on him, but though unable to speak, he beheld her yielded acquiescence, and clasping her to his bosom, falteringly articulated his thanks, and saluted her as his affianced wife.

To keep the advantage thus ceded to him it was necessary that her spirits should not be permitted so far to subside as to leave her mind leisure for reflection. Her manner was hurried and she gasped for breath, but a few moments recovered her.

“What have I promised?” said she.

“What you must immediately prepare to perform,” he laughingly interrupted. “Time passes; but your friend

Ellen has made every arrangement that can contribute to your satisfaction, and now awaits you in your chamber to give the necessary assistance. Go to her then my lovely and beloved bride!—wife of my affections—companion of my future life—my long, long, destined Olivia!”

He conducted her to the stairs foot, where she broke from him and quickly disappeared.

An alteration in his own dress was soon accomplished, and he went to the drawing-room where his uncle with doctor Filmer momentarily expected him. He told them of his wishes to hurry Olivia through the ceremony before her fears gathered strength in recollection; and the sacred page was accordingly

opened in solemn preparation. With restless anxiety he listened for the footsteps that were to announce the approach of his bride, and when they at length were heard to descend the stairs, he hastened from the room to greet her without witnesses.

But when his eyes rested on her, he in the moment almost persuaded himself she was more than human. The elegance and graces of her form had ever been conspicuous; but this was the first time he had ever beheld her except in mourning, and the purity of her mind seemed to breath around her and render her dress of yet more dazzling whiteness. He advanced to meet her, and taking both her hands stopped to contemplate her features with earnest and enamoured

attention. The glowing blush that tinted her cheek added to the soft lustre of her eyes an expression of interest altogether irresistible! he beheld her with increasing adulation: but the gaze of passion was tempered with the respectful tenderness her character inspired, and while her head bent to elude his scrutiny, he exultingly discovered emotions that beat in accordance to his own.

To increase those trembling apprehensions already so painfully apparent could yield him however but imperfect pleasure; the sentence that was on his lips he forbore to speak, and Mrs. Bernard leading the way to the drawing room he followed with his half reluctant partner.

Doctor Filmer and Mr. Belnard stood an instant to contemplate this living picture! Charles possessed external attractions not inferior to Olivia's; and they might truly be said to afford models of beauty to the eye and enchantment to the senses. They approached the table and the signal was given to the Doctor; who audibly commenced the solemn sacrament. The eyes of Charles were fixed on the face of his bride; he saw the crimson blush that rushed impetuously, and then receding robbed her cheek of all its bloom, but without hesitation she pronounced the irrevocable vow, and kneeling with her he heard the words that pronounced her his wife; and received the final benediction which was most fervently bestowed by the pious and venerable clergyman.

The struggle was now over and Olivia yielded to the influence of the sensations that overwhelmed her. The grateful thanks of Charles were answered only by tears, but they were evidently the effusions of a heart overcharged with its own sensibility, and the timely relief soon restored her. With infinite grace she received their congratulations, and replied to their claims of affinity a smile of approving pleasure that added to the exultation of her ardently enraptured husband.

Doctor Filmer had been detained from a very particular engagement and now took his leave. The tea was immediately after brought in, but before it was concluded the carriages passed round to the porch.——Olivia looked surprised!——

“Are you frightened?” said Charles, laughing; “do you suppose I am going to shut you up in an old castle?——”

“The evil is now inevitable,” rejoined his uncle; “I hope, therefore, she will brave this misfortune as she has hitherto braved others, with undaunted courage!”

“I am at least willing to share the hazard,” she smilingly replied.

“And to trust yourself with me?” said Charles, presenting his hand for her’s.

She freely gave it and leading her to the chariot he placed himself in it beside her, and they drove off to make way

for Mrs. Belnard's carriage which immediately followed.

This little instance of confidence was inexpressibly delightful to the heart of Charles; but fearful of increasing her timid embarrassment and anxious to relieve her mind from all suppositions, he suppressed the overflowings of gratitude that rose on his lips, and hastened to inform her of their present destination by relating the conversation which had taken place the night before, when his uncle's hints had banished her the parlour.

The necessity of his attending the marriage of Constance was every way apparent, and his determination of not leaving Olivia every way fixed; but the hasty-formed plan of his uncle started him, and it was

not till a serious investigation of the subject, that he consented to represent to Olivia the arguments which influenced him. He foresaw the difficulty she mentioned of entering his family so sudden and uninvited ; but the letter of his father and mother was a convincing proof that they were prepared to receive her with delight, and his uncle had been charged with numberless and affectionate solicitations that she might abridge all delays and consent to reward an attachment so tried and so steady. To win her by his own persuasions, was, however, his anxious wish, but reason and delicacy remained to be convinced, and he now repeated to her the entreaties of his family through his uncle, and would have given her the letter to peruse, but he feared the expressions of affection might oppress her

already fluctuating spirits with new emotion. He therefore merely adverted to it; and proceeded to inform her that as their return to the neighbourhood of Windsor might not be immediate, he had deemed it a point of respect to the memory of him, who in the moment of death had united them by an obligation so solemn, to evince that respect by giving possession of the good man's bequest to her for whom it was intended.—

“You are then taking me to Estlake Lodge?” interrupted Olivia, joyfully.

“My own Olivia, I am—I see that in this instance, I anticipated your wishes, and hope that in every feature of our mind, we may bear an equal resemblance. But to proceed——”

“Cruel as you were in leaving me, when I almost believed myself secure of you, I yet could not relinquish the self-persuasion that you were destined to be mine. When I received your assignments of the house and money, I obeyed your orders respecting the last ; but the first I intuitively considered still your’s, and as it wanted repairs, I also ordered such alterations as I believed most to your taste. But though pleased—enchanted at the contemplation of my work, I yet solemnly assure you, that when the apartments which I in fancy appropriated to you, were finished and finally arranged, I never from that day have seen them. This delicacy is perhaps romantic, but I hoped the relation of it might please you, and it is only to you I have told my motives because only you can understand their purity.”

“ O, Belnard,” she replied, “ how surely have you won my heart !”

“ And yet, Olivia,” he cried ; “ you in that moment believed me degraded by the most horrid crimes.——”

“ Reproach me not,” she hastily interrupted;—“ it is the only fault my heart ever did or ever will commit against you.”

In this moment the chariot stopped, and Olivia found herself welcomed as the mistress of that mansion which had been to her an asylum. Returning memory brought scenes to her view which painfully oppressed her heart; but to the salutations of duty, rejoicing, relationship and love, she returned the most grateful acknowledgements. The alterations had

completely changed every apartment except the late respected owner's study and chamber. Belnard therefore prevented her entering these, and with smiling triumph led her round the gardens, and visited those spots which recalled incidents that, contrasted with the present moment, increased the value of what he now possessed.

Mrs. Belnard's morning excursion had been to Estlake Lodge, where she inspected the preparations for the evening visit; and as alacrity supplied the place of numbers, all her orders were carefully obeyed. Old Maddox with pride contributed his share, and the perfect elegance and simplicity that reigned throughout, was carefully preserved by his good management.

Thus in possession of his highest hopes, if Colonel Belnard remembered past disappointments, it was but to increase the happiness in which they now terminated. He beheld Olivia fill that station which his dreams had so often portrayed to him, and in hearing her called by his name, his pride and affections equally exulted in anticipating the introduction of such a daughter, such a sister, and such a wife into the bosom of his beloved family at Belvale.

CHAP. XI.

FINAL DEVELOPEMENT.



THE distance from Windsor to Belvale, was seventy-five miles, and Belnard and his Olivia having taken an early breakfast, set out on a journey which every circumstance combined to render delightful. His uncle and aunt had left their own house several hours before, and independent of his own influence, he knew that they would arrive in time to secure for his bride the external respect and real affection with which he was anxious she should be received; and his as-

surances had already calmed in her mind, all apprehensions of an introduction so awful and so sudden.

Belnard now, for the first time, began to discover the sentiments and dispositions of his wife. The reserve, the firmness, the unyielding steadiness she had hitherto evinced, he found, were established on principles which the moral and religious philosopher might glory in emulating. The difficulties of her circumstances, the singularity of her situation as a woman young, beautiful, and unprotected, had called on her to assert those powers of mind which enabled her to depend only on herself.—Those perfections which are generally deemed peculiar to the manly character were her's in the fullest lustre; yet her voice and countenance

possessed a sweetness that won the affections her superiority distanced into respect. Such was the character Belnard's judgement approved; but he little supposed that in dismissing the apparent elevation, she could assume new and yet more irresistible graces: the candour which even in mystery was ever distinguished now received the additional attractions of a singleness of thought, a guileless vivacity, an artlessness which those who had been uninformed of her mental qualifications might term the simplicity of inexperience; but Belnard well knew how fearfully oppressive had been the calamities she had supported, and though surprised and doubly charmed at the variety of manner, which in the social intercourse of life must render her more universally captivating, he also knew that

neither in time, place, or circumstance, could she suffer a reduction to the general level of her sex.

The confidence which she had hitherto withheld, gave him no uneasiness but that arising from the supposition that had he known something of her situation he could have rendered her essential service: but though grateful for this incontrovertable proof of his esteem, she was yet most earnest to justify it to reason, rather than prejudice, and avail herself of this opportunity for relating her story without fear of interruption.

“Have you no fears,” said he, smiling, “of losing my esteem in this confession?”

“No,” she replied, “because I have

no fears that you will judge me severely."

No orator could have found a more interested auditor, he reclined in the corner of the carriage, and folding his arms across in an attitude of enrapt attention, fixed his eyes on the speaker.

"I must begin my story with my mother," said Olivia, "as from her example, I learned to support the painful duties which fate imposed. She was the daughter of a gentleman high in rank, and yet higher in ambition, and in this passion all sentiments of natural affection were lost. She was addressed by a gentleman of considerable fortune, and after repeated presentations, found that the only means of escaping the husband of her father's choice, was to marry one of her own."

“She told us this circumstance to justify the ways of Providence ; to this error she owed her miseries, and however unfortunate must have been her union with a man her heart could not acknowledge, she yet felt how enviable might have been her situation with him when compared to the lot she had chosen for herself.”

“My father was an officer in a regiment then quartered in the neighbourhood, and aid-de-camp to the general commanding the district. His person was handsome, his manners insinuating, and his avowed sentiments more than commonly refined. To these sentiments my mother trusted for future happiness, and my grandfather never forgave the disappointment of his hopes :——to the moment of his death his resentment was unabated.”

“ Till that period my father’s conduct, though not uncensurable, had kept within the limits of open depravity ; but when he obtained full possession of the fortune which in right descended to his wife, his character rapidly unfolded itself. His failings I would suppress, but justice to my mother’s virtues demands the exposure of the enormities by which she suffered.”

“ He had received from nature, strong passions which were matured in the lap of indulgence. His mother possessed a small jointure, but her ambition was unbounded, and she placed her son at a public school, for the purpose of making connections which afterwards became his ruin. Her death left him no independence, and the vices he could not purchase,

became his through other means; the hazard-table occasionally supplied him; on failure of this, he had other resources; the debaucheries of his associates, he assisted and shared, and where he transgressed the boundaries of the law, he vindicated himself by personal courage."

"My mother soon found her error, but the severities of her fate, did not appear till after her father's death. She then removed to her paternal residence, and from that hour, the care of her children was the only pleasure she could boast. She, however, considered herself as having incurred the misfortune by disobedience, and submitted to the penalty without a murmur."

"But though deserted by her husband,

and unacquainted with his pursuits, she had yet to learn that in escaping ignorance, she encountered new misfortune. She one day received a letter from him, in which with the most elaborate contrition, he confessed his misconduct, and implored her forgiveness; as a proof of which, he entreated she would accompany him to the West Indies, where he was compelled by the situation of his affairs, immediately to go. Had her principles permitted her to refuse this request, she had no option; in the same hour, her house was seized under execution, and having hastily packed up her children's cloathes and her own, she set out for Falmouth, unattended by even one servant, and possessed of a sum of money no more than sufficient to defray the expences of the journey."

“ My father’s letter was dated from that place, and he had promised to wait for her, but she was deceived in her expectations of seeing him : he had sailed the very day he wrote to her, and she found herself entirely dependent on the captain of the ship in which our passage had been secured, and in which we soon after sailed from our native land. What might have been her conduct in this voyage, I had not sufficient observation to notice, but I am certain that in avoiding the pity of her fellow passengers, she also avoided the offers of service which she either could not, or would not accept.”

“ In due time we landed at the destined port; but my father was up the country. An insurrection amongst the blacks

had lately taken place; he volunteered against them, and his daring conduct in the field, obtained the notice of his commander;—promotion in a black corps ensued, and he returned to meet my mother with something like an establishment.”

“ The various occurrences of a five year’s residence in that quarter of the globe I pass over; but it is certain that my mother’s character supported her husband’s pretensions to the rank which his conduct forfeited; he therefore publicly treated her with respect, but the evolutions of fortune’s wheel often left us in extreme misery, or raised us to the apparent pinnacle of human happiness.”

“ At length my father received a letter.

from his old friend the General, which changed our prospects. It offered him a lucrative employment in the *East* Indies, where he had himself obtained an important command. This was joyful intelligence even to my mother, who disliked the climate and the manners of the people she mixed with, and we soon had adieu to the pestilence and warfare of these devoted regions."

"On reaching England, we heard that the General was about to sail, and my father afraid of being recognised, sent my mother to learn what had been done in his favour. She would not go without her children, and though I was but ten years old, I well remember the reception we found: it appeared to me kind and affectionate, but my mother returned it by

a coldness of manner that astonished me and disconcerted him ; but he persevered in his professions of friendship for my father, to whom he instantly sent an express. Arrangements were immediately made, and my father finally arrived in time to sail with his family in the same ship that conveyed his patron."

"I know not to this moment, how we were so suddenly and so magnificently provided for that voyage, but I well remember that my mother severely reproached my father for the part he had acted. He denied the charge, and I recollect the words that closed this debate. "I will do my duty as your wife," said she, "and the mother of your children, but my confidence in your honor is entirely destroyed, and my vows of obedience

shall only be extended so far as my own judgement may henceforward dictate."

"What a dangerous lesson has her daughter been taught!" cried Belnard.—
 "Proceed my Olivia."

"We arrived in safety at Calcutta; and my father's fortune seemed to be linked to that of the General's. We followed him up the country, but none of the inconveniences incident to a camp, were suffered to approach us. My mother, however, treated our patron with a degree of haughtiness that greatly excited my father's resentment, but she was unmoved by the flatteries of the one, or the threats of the other, nor could any severities urge her to revenge them by deserting herself: she believed that her children

could only look to her for their future situation, and the dangers by which she was surrounded, increased her caution but did not appal her courage. It was in this period that we first became acquainted with Lewis;—he was then emerging from childhood, and his mother having died some time before, his father, who was in the same regiment with mine, gladly allowed him the privilege of our society. Marcella and he were mutually attracted by a very strong resemblance of character, and the manly decision, which even at that early age he displayed, wonderfully caught her fancy. My mother saw the dawnings of a passion which has since proved so steady, and encouraged those sentiments to ripen, which have, I hope, proved a permanent blessing to both.”

Such was our situation, when a gentleman and lady who had been particularly attentive to my mother, received accounts that their only child, a daughter, had died in England. They had for some months been preparing to join her there, and the stroke was dreadfully afflicting; but their affection for my mother induced them to adopt a plan of relief which I hope to them proved successful; they proposed adopting her two daughters as their own, and as they were going to England to spend the remainder of their days, solicited to take us with them. My mother herself was joined in this invitation, with aluring promises of independence, but her answer was characteristic.—She refused to abandon her husband; and consigned to the care of her friends the only ties

which rendered life valuable. With these kind friends we left India, and Lewis was sent over in the same vessel, and for the same purpose—that of improvement.”

“ Thus were Marcella and I again brought to England. The rudiments of education we had received from maternal instructions, and no expence was spared to mature them: but alas! our kind benefactors, though permitted to see the completion of their work, were not permitted to enjoy it; their constitutions long delicate, could no longer resist ill-health, they died within a few months of each other, and left to us their blessing and the entire of their wealth.”

“ At this time I was at the age of

nineteen and Marcella three years younger; the property was therefore placed in the hands of guardians who faithfully fulfilled their trust. They settled the affairs with as much expedition as possible, and we found ourselves possessed of an equal share in actual securities to the amount of eighty thousand pounds, and value in jewels to the amount of half as much more."

"To our mother we now wrote an account of what had passed with the eager expectations that we could induce her to join us in England: but in this we were mistaken! my father intercepted this letter as he had done all others, and instituted an immediate inquiry of how he could possess himself of the fortunes under the title of sole guardian. The

gentlemen in whom the care rested, decided the matter at the very first intimation of what was intended; they lodged it in the Court of Chancery, and all claims were instantly given up; but we received commands to join our mother abroad, and our wishes to see her left us not the power to refuse."

"In short, we again set sail, and again in safety arrived at Calcutta: but what was our surprise and consternation to learn that our father and mother had removed to a distant settlement in the island of Sumatra, and that Lewis, to whom Marcella was solemnly engaged, and who had returned the year before, had lately married to a beautiful English girl, and was gone with her into the interior."

“The first article of this information was contained in a letter which my father had left for us in the hands of a gentleman who he assured us would take every care to conduct us in safety to the new residence of my mother. The last information we received from the gentleman himself, of whose veracity Marcella and I, as if informed by one spirit, at once admitted doubts; but can you wonder at this, or at our repugnance to intrust ourselves to his protection, when I inform you it was this man you saw when you first saw my father?”

“But situated as we were, unknowing and unknown in Calcutta, we could not remain there without some declared purpose, and to declare that we waited to inform ourselves of the truth respecting

Lewis, was glaringly improper. Deprived, therefore, of an alternative, we consented to obey the injunctions we had received;—a country ship was in readiness to sail, and in this we embarked with our new acquaintance; but our dislike to him had by this time amounted to a degree of abhorrence, which he soon justified by avowing that he had obtained from my father the choice of either of us; and having fixed his mind on Marcella, he affected to be persuaded that her election of him was as fully established. His treachery respecting Lewis now appeared; Marcella taxed him with it, and was answered by a loud laugh: she at once openly avowed her contempt for the falsehood and the fabricator of it, and asserted her intentions to marry none but the man he had vilified.—His exertions

to please her now changed to malice, he scowled at us with frightful meaning, and I felt well persuaded that had we been in his power, Marcella might dearly have repented her sincerity."

"But when we soon after embraced our mother, we forgot ourselves in the anxiety which so impressively reigned in her features. The traces of care had strongly marked them, and the pleasure she evinced at seeing us was tinted by regret. She was, I observed, in continual fears for us, and we soon learned the cause: my father had obtained the guardianship of the person and fortune of Marcella's lover, Mr. Ruse, who being now of age demanded an account; but the money was not forthcoming, and the sacrifice of a daughter was the measure.

adopted to pay the debt. The plan seemed to have been regularly laid down with a determination of success, and we were in a country where my father's authority was absolute, and our lives in his hands: but Marcella continued firm against threats or entreaties. My father desired an interview to learn her final determination, and it proved decisive; she openly avowed her intentions of uniting herself only to Lewis! Unaccustomed to reign in his passions, he now lost all power of controuling them;—he snatched up a dirk that lay on the table, and unsheathed it—my mother rushed between—and——”

Olivia became so pale at this part of her narrative, that Bernard feared she would faint, and requested her to forbear

the rest ; but in a few moments she recovered and proceeded.

“ I will pass over this scene ;——my father was surrounded by persons whom his conduct had already made his enemies, and apprehensive of the consequences, he exerted every means for my mother’s recovery. We removed for the benefit of a cooler atmosphere to the mountains situated without the town, where he in his official capacity resided, and it was here that my mother concerted and executed our flight. Alladin had long followed her with the most watchful duty and attachment, and he it was who procured the means. When all was in readiness he gave us notice to be prepared at a certain hour, when he would come for us attended by the two persons to

whom he entrusted the secret and confided our safety; but we hesitated to abandon him to the punishment that must inevitably attend him, if his courage and humanity were discovered. The poor fellow however was tutored in the school of nature and would not break her ties, yet it happened that they were afterwards broken, and I cannot express to you how truly happy I felt when I learned that the voice which Marcella in her terror did not recognise, was his."

"But to resume.—Alladin gave the signal agreed on, and at midnight entered our chamber window followed by his two friends. He told us that a canoe was prepared; that it was stored with provisions and a large box of such cloathes as we might want. We scrupled

not to trust ourselves with those for whose fidelity he vouched; they carried my mother, and we followed to the little barge, in which we were soon seated with as much convenience as the situation would admit of: our faithful benefactor then sprung upon the sands as we swiftly pushed off, and we saw his figure for the last time, as we thought, running towards our deserted residence."

"The weather was in every way favourable and our sailors proved good pilots.—They were well acquainted with the coasts, and advised us rather to trust ourselves with an open enemy than a treacherous friend. The English settlements in Sumatra were so few, that we might easily be traced, and by venturing across the Straits of Sunda, and pro-

ceeding to the bay of Batavia we must be certain at this season of procuring a passage at least for Holland. The plan in every respect met our approbation; we were fearless of the sea and my mother suffered nothing from sickness as we had apprehended. Our barge was either carried by the tide, the current, or the wind; and when these failed was rowed towards our destination, which we finally approached. The wealthy and luxurious city of Batavia appeared in view but we adhered to our first purpose of seeking for safety on board a Dutch merchant ship, in which we hoped to purchase the kindness which humanity might refuse: and it was *your* uncle—who received and sheltered us !——”

Belnard saw the apostrophe that gra-

titude made on recalling this incident, and though he forbore to interrupt her by reply, the soft expression of his eyes evinced the sentiments that filled his heart.

“Of this strange and mysterious meeting,” she resumed, “you are already informed. You also know the dreadful catastrophe of our voyage, and the un-auspicious omen under which we reached our native shore. How we were saved you also know, and believe me, the conduct of Waltheim on that occasion justified my mother’s choice.”

“And your’s Olivia?”

She shook her head, “It is now unnecessary,” she replied, “to dwell on what

were then my feelings.—My mother knew that my heart had never made a particular election, and having herself suffered so much by one mode of conduct, she in this instance adopted the opposite extreme. But though I was painfully aware of the sacrifice I had made of my own right to make a choice, I contented myself in the belief that the promise had given peace to my mother's dying moments; nor did I discover the precipice on which I stood till——

“Till when, Olivia?”

“——Till you discovered to me that the comparisons I had involuntarily drawn between Waltham's character and your's, excited sentiments——altogether inimical to the promise I had given.”

“ But, why blush at this confession to me now, Olivia ? ”

“ I do not know,” she laughingly replied : for after all it is only awkward, since delicacy now rather demands than forbids an explanation of what were then my thoughts.”

“ This discovery for the moment made me believe that I had bound myself to misery ; but I recollected my obligations to Waltheim and to my mother, and resolved not to descend from my character. Had any other than that mother formed my principles and instructed me in the rules of right, I might, perhaps, have rendered you and myself contemptible, but from this idea my soul recoiled with sufficient force to disentangle

my wavering affections. I felt indeed for you as a sister might ; yet I saw that your strength of mind had forsaken you, and that to give you that portion of my confidence to which the assumed character of a brother entitled you, would be in truth to encourage your indulgence of weakness. Though I did, and do believe that there exists a degree of affection between friendship and love, I yet felt, that as the promised wife of Waltham, I dare not retain it where the character of my husband could not bear a comparison ; and considering myself a moment in Waltham's place, I acknowledged that the trial might be dangerous to the peace though not the purity of our union. To dismiss this sentiment was also my determination, and though I never could become indifferent to your welfare, I yet

ceased to consider it as combined with my own."

"But when Doctor Estlake called me to task, I found I had deceived myself, and saw the necessity of protracting a marriage, that would in truth be criminal. The accident, however, which immediately followed, changed the current of events, and Waltham by the noblest act of generosity restored me to myself. I lamented for him the fate he had chosen, yet I could no longer play the heroine! and a few hours indulgence of a former prepossession completely erased all those exertions I had made to overcome it. Your possession of my heart soon became absolute, and in believing that I was destined to be your wife I lost all memory of past evils, and all fears for what in

future might befall me. With you I could boldly brave them all; the scenes of horror and bloodshed!—the battle's rage!—the fatigues and sufferings of warfare and famine, for me could wear no terrors, if for your sake I encountered them!——”

“O, my Olivia!” interrupted Belnard; “was this indeed possible?——was I so very, very rich in your affections?”

“I avow it,” she returned. “Such were the sentiments I indulged when Lewis appeared, and informed me that my father and his *ci-devant* ward, Mr. Ruse, were in search of us. A possibility that I might be torn from you was now apparent, for though I might perhaps, on reflection, have thought myself justi-

fiable in refusing submission to the authority of such a father, there is something so sacred in the appellation that I naturally hesitated to deny it. When you left me to accompany Marcella, I was in doubt what step I ought in rectitude to pursue, but a few hours consideration assured me, that in accepting the protection of a husband, I could transgress none of the laws of nature and morality, and I accordingly determined that if on your return you renewed your entreaties for our marriage, I would no longer hesitate in my assent."

"Such was the state of my mind when Lady Senegal, the day before she left Windsor, came to pay me a visit of condolence on the double loss of my sister and my lover Waltheim ; and I may safely

add, that curiosity to see how I had borne my misfortune actuated her more than kindness. Miss Arnault was in the room, and her ladyship in adverting to the faithless conduct of your sex to our's so glaringly hinted at some former transaction relative to you and Ellen, that the poor girl in confusion left us. The particulars of the affair I was immediately informed of, and, in short, was made to believe that both Mr. Arnault and his daughter expected a return of your addresses, and that your renewed attentions to the young lady had, this second time, won her heart. I could not hear this account with indifference, and am certain that I betrayed my feelings, for Lady Senegal endeavoured to retract what she had said, but it was in a manner that added confirmation. My reli-

ance on her truth was however slight ; but I saw the necessity of investigating it, and applied to Miss Arnault herself, who in much confusion acknowledged that it might be."

" Good God !" exclaimed Bènard ; " is it possible that follies so ridiculous and so childish as her's, could also be so mischievous ? "

" Her vanity,—not her heart was misled," returned Olivia:—" but to continue.——"

" Now, indeed, I was compelled to remember my mother's precepts and example. My former sacrifice was difficult, but to complete this required all the aid of religion and all the appeals of morality.

I dared not repay her father's hospitality and her own kindness by depriving her of happiness, and in the proportion that mine depended on you, I supposed her's did also.—The accomplishment of hope I found could only be purchased by the sacrifice of self-approbation, and I resolved to retain the last."

"I now exerted all the powers of my mind not only to give you up, but to persuade you that I did it willingly. But when you returned—devoted to me, and to me only—when Doctor Estlake bestowed on you my hand—O, Belnard—can you wonder that my resolution was shaken?—that I saw I must be wretched without you?—"

"Olivia," he interrupted; "this *was* romance;—a refinement on delicacy

and rectitude.—At least, the world may term it so;—but much as it has cost me, I yet must in justice to my sentiments declare, that this delineation of your's has increased the solidity, though it could not the fervency of my attachment.—”

“O, then,” she cried, with indescribable animation, “I shall remember that moment as one of the happiest of my life !”

Belnard looked at her steadily; but language could afford him no expression to reply, and she proceeded.

“But to perform this severe duty with effect, it was necessary for you to believe that you were willingly abandoned.

For this effort I had no power, and I could only delay the declaration of my refusal. I confined myself to my chamber till obliged to attend at the reading of the will, and then indeed—I confess—that again I hesitated. I began to doubt that I ought to resist this concurrence of circumstances which almost gave me to you without my interference; but the interposition of accidental intelligence at once decided my fate; because it robbed you of——my affections!——”

“Beware!” cried Belnard, seriously smiling;——“you have much now to account for, and, recollect, you cannot now escape my power.”

“Do you also beware how you punish

me," she answered ; " you have now to learn how quickly I once recovered my heart, and again may—but alas ! even this privilege is denied me—I am married !——"

" Charming sound !" cried Belnard,—
 " I may then, fearlessly listen—— !"

" It was to Jenny, the housemaid," she sportively resumed, " that I owed the obligation of regaining that which I feared was gone for ever. She came to my apartment in search of her mistress, and there related the wonderful story which Ellen herself so lately cleared up. I heard with astonishment, but I also heard with disgust!—such a conduct at such a time! —Dear Charles ! forgive me, that I believed it possible.——At first, indeed, I

did not, but circumstance seemed to prove it.—Impossible ! thought I ;——this man is incapable of love !——he knows it not at least in the acceptation that I do ; and shall never receive from me an affection which he understands not how to value or to return—I felt indeed that I no longer loved, for I despised you—it was to your virtues I gave my heart, and when they fled, I regained my gift without difficulty.”

“ Without difficulty, Olivia ? ”

“ Yes, believe me.—Your sex, early accustomed to the contemplations of vice, knows not the feelings it impresses on our's.—We view the diseases and infirmities inflicted by nature and providence, with pity ;——madness excites

terror; and folly, contempt;——but at the approach of this earthly demon beauty fades—riches vanish—wisdom sinks—and the soul of a woman turns with antipathy from its baleful contaminations !”

“ Good God ! Olivia ; what a picture have you drawn of me as I then appeared !”

“ A just one according to my then opinion.——Your professions of attachment seemed to me so sincere that I was surprised ; for I could hardly persuade myself they were real.——I was not the object to inspire a personal passion, and I now believed you incapable of any other ; yet—when I saw you so very—very sorry.——”

“ You could not help giving me a little compassion to soften your contempt ? ”

“ It was exactly so.—My father’s arrival in such a moment wore no terrors, and my accordance to his commands had now no merit. I was sick of the world, and of myself——”

“ Ah, Olivia,” interrupted Charles——
“ you loved me a little notwithstanding.”

“ I think I did not,” she returned ;
“ for though I never ceased to lament your depravity, I never lamented that I was separated from the interest I must as your wife have felt for you.”

“ I will gloss over, except in one instance, what passed from that time till I

again saw you, and that instance relates to the fortune which I may truly assert my regret, is not now your's."

"And why regret it?"

"Because, though it might not increase my value to you, your family might——"

"You are unjust to them," interrupted Belnard, colouring deeply with mortification.

"Pardon me," she hastily interrupted "——you shall never again have cause to blush for me!——I will merely relate the circumstance and—forget it——"

"On leaving Arnault Hill, I expected

an immediate commencement of hostilities, but my father and his friend, in loosing Marcella, (as they found irrecoverable), formed designs with which they well knew I could not be threatened into compliance. The compact that had been formed between them once depended on my sister, and was now devolved to me: their persuasions however, or their threats had equal inefficacy, and I was at length compelled to remind my father that I considered myself bound to him only by the ties of blood, and could assert my legal independence whenever I thought proper. The look that accompanied this speech awed him, and he gave up the pursuit, except when in presence of his friend, and even then pressed it very faintly."

"But I had soon an opportunity of

proving to him, that in withholding from him my affections, I had not withdrawn my duty. The affair that had first banished him to the West Indies, he now fancied had been forgotten, and avowed his name ;—this imprudence was severely punished ; he was arrested, and closely confined, and I learned that if his cause came to trial, his fate was inevitable. A hint, however, pointed out to me the means of saving him. The witnesses, I was told were mercenary, and to buy them off the only remedy. For this purpose, I went through the legal forms, and received my fortune with the interest due for three years :——it was not many hours in my possession, but it obtained a father's rescue——O, Belnard !——from an ignominious death.”

“ It was while he was in this dreadful

situation, I succeeded in making the consignment to you, for I was aware that his knowledge of that wealth being mine, must have afforded new cause of dissention. He believed that I entirely depended on him, and as, to that belief I owed a cessation from the persecutions of Mr. Ruse, I guardedly concealed from him the valuables which still remained to me, and were as I then thought, in the possession of Miss Arnault. One ornament of value only I had with me;—it was a necklace which had been presented by me to my mother, and I sold it—not because I wanted money, but because the money my father occasionally supplied me with was obtained in a way that I deemed unhallowed.—The gaming-table was his bank, and he drew on it with various successes.”

“ But after his liberation, he naturally wished to leave the kingdom in which he was continually subject to meet associates, who knew him, and had heard of his apprehended punishment, though he succeeded in entirely concealing the nature of his crime. We passed over to the continent, and visited such places as were most suited to the purposes of my father and his friend Ruse, who mutually aided in seizing the favours of fortune. In this tour, an interval of twenty-six months elapsed, and during that time, I never met the smile of sincerity. My father, indeed, was continually anxious for me to be seen with him, and known as his daughter; the singularity of a young woman appearing in public without a companion of her own sex, gave him no concern, and I often found my situation

extremely unpleasant, though happily I escaped the insults to which I supposed myself liable."

"I rejoiced to find myself once more in England, though to me it was a wilderness!—the friends I might have claimed, my father's character deterred me from seeking:—and another feeling yet more powerful—for worlds I would not have been seen by you—and so apprehensive was I of an accidental meeting, that I literally hid myself, except when obliged to visit a public place."

"But the crisis of my fate now quickly approached. My father and his colleague had a violent quarrel, and mutual accusations and mutual recriminations followed. This occurrence took place in Bris-

tol the very night after I had met Waltheim at the rooms, when I was so much disappointed that he was called away before I had made enquiries for my friends, which my heart so much panted to learn——”

“It was so late when my father returned from this fraca, that I had gone to rest, but I was summoned to attend him, and immediately obeyed. He then informed me that if Ruse arrested him for the debt he must lie in a jail for life, and to avoid this fate by a speedy flight was his only hope of rescue. Preparations were soon made, and in the next hour we left Bristol.”

“By a circuitious rout we were four days in travelling to London, and it was

n this journey that my father first evinced any remorse:—his agitations were indeed dreadful, and he perceived that I shuddered at his vehement and incoherent expressions.”

“ You do not understand these feelings,” said he, seizing my hand with a fearful grasp.—“ Had I been the man your mother believed me, my state might have been enviable, and I’ll be cursed if I know for what I sacrificed her peace and my own, to vice and debauchery ! but past times cannot be recalled !”——

“ My dearest father,” I exclaimed, “ can they not be retrieved ?”

“ Pooh,”—he returned, “ you talk like what you are—an angel.” (Unhappy

man!—to him indeed I might appear so).
 —“ Only for you I had met my doom
 “ long since, but I have a superstition that
 “ while you are with me, nothing very
 “ bad can happen!”—“ Can you wonder;
 Charles that, such language from a father
 afflicted my heart?—I threw my arms
 round his neck, and he had been so little
 unaccustomed to my caresses, that he
 was deeply affected. He wept bitterly,
 and swore the most terrific oaths that I
 must guide him, for he was unable to
 guide himself.”

“ But alas! this resolution was soon forgotten.—On arriving in London, he hastened to procure a passage in any ship about to sail, and an American merchantman afforded us prospects of escape.—We got on board, and were already un-

der weigh, when—Ruse, accompanied by other persons came up with us, produced a warrant, and dragged my wretched—wretched parent, to imprisonment and ———death.”——

Olivia was so much affected, that Bernard insisted on hearing no more, but she requested to finish her narration and dismiss it for ever.

“As the debt could never be paid, he reconciled himself to his destiny.—His fund of wealth was indeed very small, yet he acted as if it was inexhaustable; nor, I am persuaded, did one thought for me ever once intrude. He had collected around him such companions as deprived me of all hope for his reformation, and I found him so far lost to every sense of de-

licacy, that when I went to visit him in his confinement, I was myself obliged to direct the dismissal of his associates. They were in fact, more willing to avoid the constraint of my presence, than he was to impose their absence, and when my wishes were known, I was no longer intruded on.—I went and returned at the same hour, and though an object of curiosity to numbers I was never insulted—but once——”

“Till then, indeed, I knew not the pangs of a wounded spirit—but I will forget it——”

“To my father’s dissolution, I now looked forward with more of expectation than sorrow.—The gratifications he indulged in were evidently undermining

his health, and having openly abandoned the rank of a gentleman, he became thoroughly degraded. I had no reasoning to offer, that could operate on a mind wholly bereft of one moral or religious belief, and my only aim was now to fulfil the remnant of my duty as a daughter, and to support my own character with the world.—The resources of future support contained in the trunks at Arnault Hill, I carefully concealed from him, but I began now to want them for myself; the length of time that had elapsed, however, since I had heard of the fate of those persons I had left there urged me to make inquiries before I discovered myself, and the person whom I sent for that purpose, brought me in return an account, that Miss Arnault had been the day before married to

a Mr. Belnard, and the arrival of the bride and bridegroom was expected that very night."

"And not one sigh,—one pang?" interrupted Belnard.

"I was surprised," she returned, "that the event had not taken place long before, and do not accuse me of vanity in saying that I thought it possible your remembrance of me had protracted your marriage. If it were really so, this was no time for you to learn that I still existed, that I was in distress, and wanted your friendship.—The feelings that soften the heart sometimes weaken it, and I saw the cruelty to your wife as much as to yourself, of incurring the risque."

“Dearest Olivia!” he cried; “what perfect proportions are there in your images of delicacy and virtue?”

“I am at least glad you think so,” she replied, “You see then, that thinking in this manner to receive your attentions, was out of all question—but alas!—when you saved my life—I then indeed saw I had condemned you to misery; and gratitude was too powerfully your advocate to leave me in possession of myself.—On being left to reflection I was conscious of this and the impropriety you had committed:—yet when you offered me the protection of Mrs. Belnard, again I censured myself for having censured you.—But afterwards—when, even in her presence!—dear, dear Charles—ask me not for the rest—my heart sickens at the retrospect!—”

Had Belnard been asked as a lover if his passion could admit of increase, he would have answered—"Impossible." But as a husband the fervor of affection was mingled with a sentiment something like devotion. He regarded her for some moments with fixed and earnest attention, and thanked heaven for bestowing on him a heart expansive enough to understand the value of the blessing he possessed.

This interesting story occupied many hours in the detail, but the tediousness of time was unfelt. It was past eleven o'clock when they reached Belvale.

"Do not leave me!" cried Olivia, as the step was let down.

“Not for an instant;” he replied :
 “but believe me you have no cause for
 this trembling !——”

He assisted her out—and she found herself surrounded by friends. The glare of light—the confusion of voices—the giddiness of fatigue all conspired to overwhelm and render her incapable of distinguishing objects.

“My daughter !” cried the mother of Belnard.——

Olivia hesitated and half courtseyed ; but the tide of sensations became too powerful to resist !—she threw her arms round her neck and hiding her face in her bosom burst into tears. Belnard was himself little less affected.——His sister’s

caresses,—his father's silently offered congratulations ;—Forfair's affectionate claims could not excite feelings equal to those he experienced at beholding his wife in the arms of his mother. The sight was indescribably touching !—he fervently embraced them both ; and Olivia clinging to him for support, he moved with her to the parlour where she soon recovered sufficiently to receive the felicitations of the happy group with that refined grace and modest elegance which in every action of life she had peculiarly displayed. The delight of Belnard was at first too great, but the raillery of his uncle assisted to restore him, and he was enabled to reply to the greetings of the beloved friends who surrounded him.

Thus restored to a more tranquil enjoy-

ment of the meeting, they saw dont not only to a sumptuous but a social supper. Belnard obtained his mother's permission for Olivia's place to be beside him, and by the most delicate attentions he entirely succeeded in familiarizing her to every individual of those new and affectionate relations to whom he had with such transport given her.

He could now listen to the relation of circumstances which though personally abstracted were infinitely interesting Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Belnard had arrived in time for dinner, and the former on learning that the festivities of the next day were to be held at the family castle, saw how necessary to the heir of it, must be the old gentleman's apprizal of the event which had so lately taken place.

He therefore in the evening went himself to make this communication, and was astonished to find the misanthrope turned philanthropist ! Sir Thomas had been in daily expectation of seeing his young favourite, and on old Mr. Belnard's intelligence (which they afterwards feared premature) he seemed to have experienced a total revolution of mind. His house was set in order, and the furniture which for twenty-seven years was never exhibited, now dazzled in all its pristine magnificence.

“ I cannot flatter Constance, however,” added Mr. Arthur, “ that these feats would have been performed for her. The life of solitude which vexation led Sir Thomas to adopt, has lost all its charms ; and he certainly expects some

great phenomenon in Olivia for he strictly interrogated me if she was the very same that you described to him.

But Constance thought very little of Sir Thomas and deemed his approbation or pleasure wholly unimportant. When she happened to see him she easily drew amusement from his sharp growling tone of voice and his continual irritation of temper; and when absent, the knowledge of his being in existence had no other effect than that which she occasionally experienced through her brother.

CHAP. XI

CONCLUSION.



BY eight o'clock the following morning, the carriages were in waiting to convey this little party to church. From thence they were to proceed to the Castle, where preparations were made to entertain them, and where they were to spend the rest of the day.

The behaviour of Constance on her marriage, was exactly what her uncle had described her, she laughed and cried, and was amusing as ever. Forfair beheld

only with the eye of a lover, and when she was most captious, felt himself most delighted ;—she could even contradict with fascination, and her adversary was entirely disposed to submit without a murmur. The ceremony indeed, awed her spirits into gravity, but a few tears restored them to full play.

To their carriages they now returned, and Belnard by a stratagem, contrived to occupy his own, accompanied by Olivia only. He wished her to acknowledge that she was content in having been hurried through, rather than indulged in the perturbations incident to scenes like these : and she very willingly confessed, that the longer she was a wife, the more serenely happy was her situation.

They were the last of the little

cavalcade, and of course the last to alight at the Castle; but in the moment that Belnard gave her his hand for that purpose, he was addressed to his astonishment by Jemmy, the gate-keeper from Arnault Hill. Perceiving that something unusual had occurred, he desired Olivia to wait in the carriage till he enquired; her patience was not long tried, but he came back evidently vexed:—he was silent however about the cause, and she suppressed the question that rose to her lips.—

They proceeded up stairs in pursuit of their companions, but on turning his eyes on her's to read what in this moment were her thoughts, he saw her concern, and stopped in the anti-chamber to reassure her.

“Is it possible,” said he, “that you can feel appalled at merely being introduced to a little old fellow?”

“Only tell me,” she replied, “that the cause of your vexation is not occasioned by me?”

“By you, Olivia!” he returned, gazing at her with the most softened tenderness, while his arm encircled her waist; —“can you fancy such an impossibility?”

She pressed his hand, but remained silent.

“I perceive,” he resumed, “that you are an apprehensive wife. That though you commanded the whole world before

marriage, you are now submissive to a husband's looks !”

“ I own it,” she replied——

He pressed her to his heart in speechless pleasure, and turned to proceed, when they beheld Sir Thomas observing them.——Olivia coloured in confusion, and would have passed him, but he prevented her, and very unceremoniously stared through his spectacles in her face.

“ Ha !” said he, “ who are you ?”

She was much abashed—hung down her head, and leaned against Belnard.

“ What is your name ?” he demanded in the same tone.

——“ Olivia——Sir.”——

Belnard laughed triumphantly.

“ Olivia !” repeated Sir Thomas — “ and your mother’s name ?”

“ Was also Olivia, Sir.”

“ Olivia Sayer ?” he rejoined with much impatience.

“ You knew her then !” she replied in surprise.

He shook his head and would have answered—but turned suddenly away. The conflict was, however, but momentary ; again he looked at Olivia, and on retaining the features of her mother, vehemently repeated, “ are you this man’s wife ?”

She blushed and looked up to Charles, who replied—"yes—Sir Thomas—she is my wife——!"

The old man clapped his hands together, and fell back on a chair. Belnard was inexpressibly alarmed, and conceiving at once the cause of it made a sign for Olivia to proceed to the drawing room; but catching her hand the agitated baronet falteringly exclaimed—"sure Charles you won't take her from me?"

Large drops flowed down his cheeks—Olivia confounded and astonished, stood irresolute; but he hastily rejoined—"yes, yes—go—I will see you presently.——"

She obeyed, and went forward to the

room he pointed to. The little assembly were in earnest conversation, and Ellen perceiving her emotion exclaimed—"so then ! you have seen Jemmy ?"

"The man from Arnault Hill," rejoined Mr. Belnard—observing she did not comprehend, "my dear girl, what do you fear ?"

It was not fear, it was confusion that in this moment assailed her, and she knew not what to reply or what to ask.

"After all," said Mr. Arthur, "it was as probably a friend as a foe that called yesterday morning in search of you ; but you had such a trick of running away that poor Jemmy thought we might be compelled to find chains more visible to the eye than those which already bind you."

“I find,” cried Olivia, recovering herself, “we are all at cross purposes!—for I really know not to what you advert.”

“Charles can best explain;” said Mrs. Belnard.

He soon after entered with Sir Thomas, and hastily advancing to Olivia, spoke to her in a low voice with the most expressive tenderness of countenance. The agitation of the old man excited universal astonishment, and it was evident that something important had occasioned it, but Olivia’s emotion now also became apparent; she clasped her hands and concealed her face in the bosom of her husband who supported her towards Sir Thomas.

“She forgives me?” cried the old man, his voice and lips trembling—and taking her hands in his, he said, “do you forgive me, Olivia, for the calamities I unintentionally occasioned?—will you be my daughter and——?”

“O, Sir!” she interrupted, snatching his hand to her lips——“receive me but as your daughter?—I have ever been taught to respect, though without knowing you.”

“Is that true?” he eagerly exclaimed. —“Then may the vengeance of heaven for ever follow me if the children of your mother shall not be to me as my own!—take her Charles;—you deserve the blessings which I forfeited;—but remorse has been my portion!”

Olivia could not bear this!——she threw herself on his neck and the deep sobs of the old man proclaimed his gratitude and affection. A scene like this was not calmly to be witnessed, and every individual bore testimony to the interest it excited.

“My kind friends,” at length resumed the old man, “I am satisfied, and the remnant of my life shall be devoted to obliterate the failings which have hitherto precluded me your affection. None of you can feel what I have felt—or you would forgive the singularities of my temper!——”

“You must forget this, Sir:” cried Belnard, who now supported Olivia.——
 “Your daughter cannot bear this self-accusation!”

“She is an angel,” he cried ;——“ may I but live to see her sister, and receive from her the same forgiveness !—— I shall have nothing more to ask on this side of the grave.”

Mr. Arthur Belnard could not patiently endure a continuance of his present feelings——“ *albeit unused to the melting mood,*” he found himself terribly uncomfortable ; and taking Sir Thomas by the arm, drew him aside and said something low, which had the effect it intended. The baronet cheered immediately, and acknowledged his neglect of the duties of hospitality.

“ I seriously assure you,” rejoined Mr. Arthur, “ that in all my life I never so much wanted some breakfast.——”

“Apply to Charles and Olivia then,” said Sir Thomas, jocularly——“you are their guests—not mine.”

In effect it appeared so—Charles and his Olivia were invested with all the dignities which Sir Thomas himself could relinquish; and as they perfectly understood his wishes they exerted their utmost powers to gratify them. His eyes continually rested on Olivia, and Constance complained that he had bestowed more admiration on his adopted daughter in one hour, than he had conferred on her during her life.

“That is because you are always humbugging me,” he replied.——“But come hither.——”

Constance, laughingly obeyed.

“ Give that to your husband,” said he, putting a small roll of paper into her hand.—“ I intended it for him ; and if I like him as well at my death, he shall find as much more.”

She stood suspended.

“ Are you sorry I like him ?” he sharply demanded.

“ N—n—no,” she replied putting her handkerchief to her face to conceal her tears, though half laughing—“ I’m only orry I humbugged you.—”

“ Aye”—said Sir Thomas, shaking his head—“ I see you can’t help it.”

Constance, abashed, moved to the side

of the room where her mother and Forfair were in conversation, and gave him the roll which on opening he found to be five notes for a thousand pounds each. —The generosity of this act was unexpected—Constance turned towards Sir Thomas, and would have spoken; but emotion overcame her and throwing her arms round her mother's neck,—she exclaimed—"dear, dear Mamma! do tell Sir Thomas I will never laugh at him again."

Forfair was enchanted at the effusions of a heart at once filled with grateful affection,—modesty, and the vivacity of youth.—But Mr. Arthur Belnard was in no humour to permit the indulgence of these *sentimentals* as she called them, and threatened to go back to Holland where

he could enjoy himself without apprehension of having his mind disturbed.

The pleasures of this little party gradually became more heartfelt than tumultuous, and Charles entirely forgot the vexation caused by Jemmy's information. —He supposed the person to be Ruse, and knew that Olivia was safe.—Mr. and Mrs. Belnard were grateful to heaven for the happiness of those in whom all their's were centered: and Sir Thomas found that at the age of seventy-three he was just beginning to live. By the time dinner was announced, Olivia was completely established as mistress of the family mansion, and filled her station with an easy grace which proved to others what her husband had long been convinced of, that a mind perfectly formed enables its possessor in every condition

of life, to do honor to themselves and to those with whom they are allied.

The entertainment was splendid and splendidly appointment;—mirth was softened by sensibility, and true pleasure sparkled in every eye.

At length the cloth was removed and the servants withdrawn, and Sir Thomas turning to Charles asked his permission to name the first toast? the glasses were instantly repleted; and the old gentleman rejoined ;”

“ I give you my LADY BOUNTIFUL at the top of the table.”

Her ladyship was instantly pledged; without noise 'tis true; but not with indifference.

“What, Charles!” cried his uncle, “do you consent that Olivia shall again change her name?”

“Yes,” he replied:—“it is my happiness that she merits this appellation, and will be my glory to see her obtain it.—”

A loud knocking at the great door in this moment startled them.—

“Hey day!” exclaimed Sir Thomas—
“who dare now intrude?—”

Footsteps hastily approached, the door was suddenly thrown open, and two figures entered. They were Lewis and Marcella !!!

THE END.











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